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RECIPES FOR THE GRILL, P. 28

Summer 2020

Copper's Farmer

Practical Advice for the Homemade Life • Since 1893

SUMMER
GARDEN
TIPS
P. 26

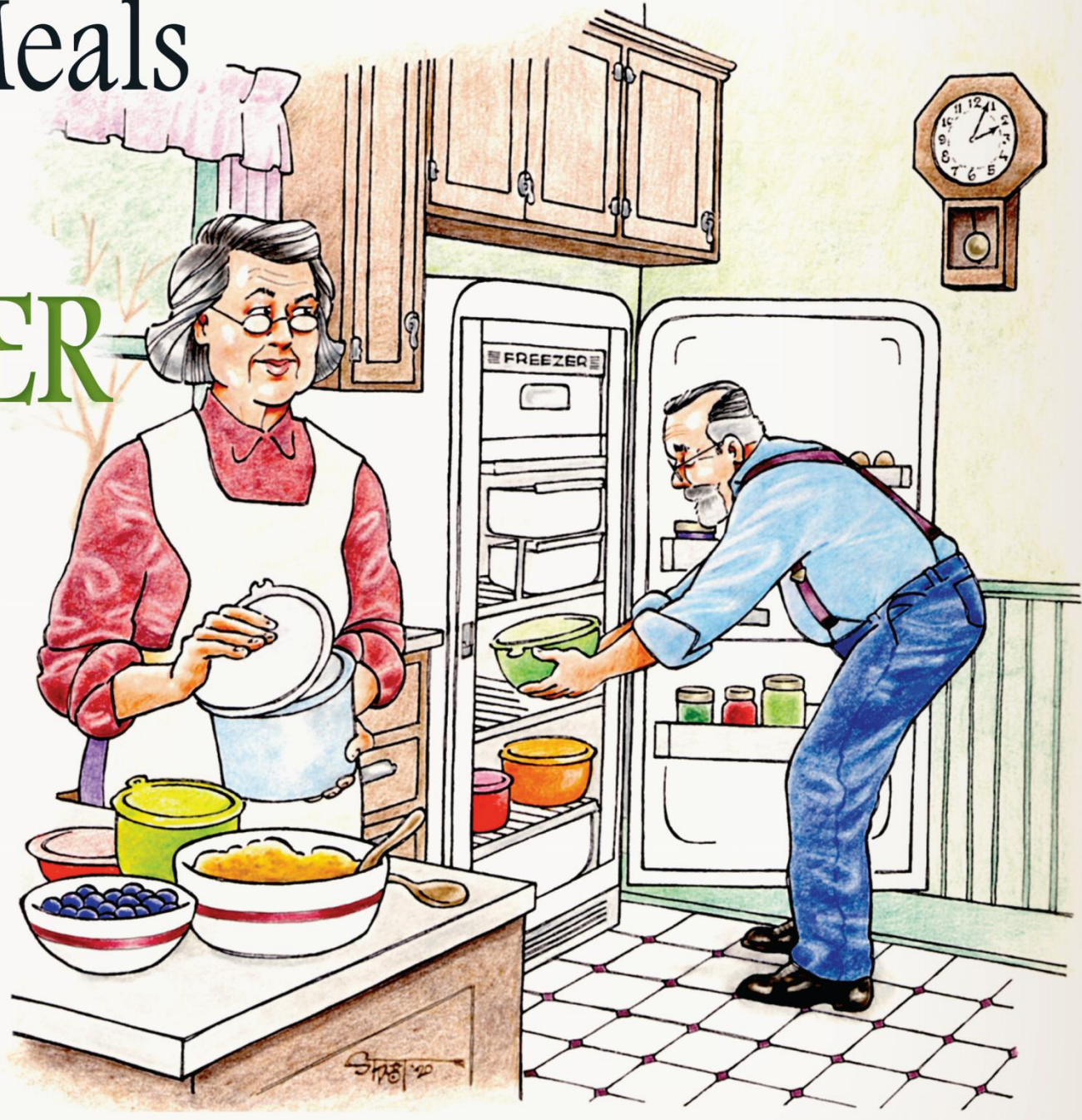
**FIX AND
FREEZE FOODS**
for Future Meals

**CREATIVE
CONTAINER
IDEAS**
for the Garden

How to Sew
**LINEN
HAND
TOWELS**

PORCHES
Beauty and Usefulness

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Contents

Summer 2020

Cover Illustration: Wayne Stroot

DEPARTMENTS

- 2** Community Buzz
A look at the top stories, posts, pins, and blogs on our social media sites.
- 3** Editor's Note
Finding the good in challenging times.
- 4** Country Critters
Snapshots of farm animals in rural Osage County, Kansas.
- 6** Rural Free Delivery
Readers share their thoughts, opinions, projects, and more.
- 7** The Good Ol' Days
Stories of being invaded by grasshoppers during the Depression era.
- 8** Trash to Treasures
John and Lindsey Corn share projects that give new life to old items.
- 10** General Store
Useful and practical products for the homestead.
- 45** In the Kitchen
■ Cookout Sides & Desserts ■
Recipes from the *Capper's Farmer* archives.



- 96** Scenic View
A beautiful photograph to showcase the season.

HOW-TO ARTICLES

- 12** Cool Kitchen Accessories
Save money with these do-it-yourself food wraps and market totes.
- 20** Rustic Wood Projects
Recycle wooden planks into a child's growth chart and a barn quilt.
- 31** Decorative Pots & Planters
Add inexpensive décor to your landscape using fabric and wooden chairs.
- 42** Do-It-Yourself Hand Towels
Replace traditional paper towels with these easy-to-make alternatives.
- 70** Pretty Patches
Use stylish repairs to extend the life of, or simply beautify, old garments.
- 74** Spa Day Luxuries
Nourish your skin with homemade soaps and scrubs.

FOOD & GARDENING

- 15** Fix, Freeze & Feast
Discover recipes that make it easy to stock your freezer with ready-to-cook meals.
- 26** Summer Garden Tips
Follow these guidelines for a happy, healthy, and productive garden.
- 28** Great Grilled Recipes
These delicious dishes will satisfy every member of the family.
- 36** Creative Containers for Gardening
A look at some interesting items that make captivating vessels for your plants.



- 78** Summer's Tasty Flavors
Turn your garden goodness and farm fresh eggs into delicious dishes.
- 81** Garden's Fruitful Finale
Use these simple methods to preserve an abundance of end-of-the-season tomatoes.

MISCELLANEOUS MUSES

- 18** A Night to Remember
Fire sparked by a bolt of lightning threatens farm family's barn.
- 40** The Ever-Useful Hay Hook
This simple device made a grueling job much easier.
- 50** Magical Memories
Remembering childhood summers spent at grandparents' Virginia farm.
- 54** Embrace Broody Hens
What you need to know to hatch chicks the traditional way.
- 60** Remembering the Radio
A look at rural America's connection to the world.
- 64** Peaceful Porches
A look at the importance and beauty of porches through the years.
- 84** Threshing Day
Memories of the good old steam engine machines.

Community Buzz



Popular on www.CappersFarmer.com

All About Zinnias

www.CappersFarmer.com/Zinnias

Zinnias are warm-weather annuals that are members of the Asteraceae family, more commonly known as the aster or sunflower family. This is the largest singular grouping of flowering plants in the world. With more than 1,500 genera and nearly 25,000 species, familiar examples include not only the patriarch sunflowers and asters, but also daisies, marigolds, coneflowers, chrysanthemums, dahlias, black-eyed Susans, dandelions, thistles, and, of course, zinnias. All are characterized by having flower parts arranged in a circle or star pattern, hence the family name “aster,” the Greek word for “star.”

Zinnia blossoms are complex. Each blossom isn't a single flower at all, but instead a tight assemblage of multiple flowers called “ray flowers” and “disk flowers.” Ray flowers are the conspicuous petals that are arranged in an outer whorl. On the other hand, disk flowers lack petals, but contain pollen- and nectar-producing reproductive parts (the source of seeds) that are confined to the flower's center. Because of this unusual arrangement, plants within the family are commonly called “composites.”

The body plan for a rank-and-file zinnia plant is simple. Leaves are opposite, and attached directly to a major stem (no petioles); leaf shape varies from linear to ovate, but is always dull-green with sandpaper-like texture. As plants age, the stem produces secondary branches, each terminating with a solitary blossom.



Top Trending Posts

www.Pinterest.com/CappersFarmer



◀ DIY Apron and Potholder

Go Wild with Native Roses ▶



www.Facebook.com/CappersFarmer

Join the Conversation

Basically, a straw bale garden is a bale of straw that's been “seasoned” by wetting it down and letting it compost for a few days.

www.CappersFarmer.com/Straw-Bale-Garden

I used to do this when I lived in Ontario. We recently moved across the country, and this year we'll do the back-breaking work of planning and developing our new bale gardens, walipini greenhouse, and food forest. I plan on a full one-third of the acre out back being straw bale gardening. I always have great success with tomatoes, peas, and beans in the bales. — Melanie Burns, via Facebook

Featured Articles

www.CappersFarmer.com/Strawberry-Pretzel-Dessert

Learn how to make a Strawberry Pretzel Dessert the whole family will love.



www.CappersFarmer.com/Homemade-Cloth-Surgical-Mask

Sew It Online has challenged all sewers to help make surgical masks to help with the shortage doctors and nurses are facing across the country. Tell us if you take part in the challenge, and how many masks you've made.



Featured Blog

Herbs That Will Save You From Bug Bites

www.CappersFarmer.com/Herbs-For-Bug-Bites

By Capper's Farmer blogger Ricardo

Do you live year-round in the tropics, or are you bound to a more temperate country? It's roughly the same, for the summers can get pretty hot and equally buggy.

Since none of us rejoice with the flying buzz and vicious jaws of some critters, let's go over a few herbs that you can bring home, or add to your backyard, to save your skin from a night of poor, painful sleep.

For information on becoming a Capper's Farmer blogger, send an email to AHouk@OgdenPubs.com.

Editor's Note

Finding the Good In Challenging Times

AS I write this letter, many of us at Ogden Publications are working from home, in an effort to keep us, as well as those who *have* to be in the office, safe and healthy. Hopefully as you're reading this, things have settled down and are well on the way to getting better.

Right now, though, I think we're all trying to find the "good" in being stuck at home and having to distance ourselves from family and friends. So, here are a few positive things I'm discovering during this difficult situation.

■ Because I don't have a 1½-hour commute now, and because my internal clock gets me up at the same time as I got up to get ready for work (but now I don't have to pack a lunch or go to the convenience store for coffee and sometimes fuel), I've got a couple more hours each day to get things done. So, I've started doing laundry and house chores before I start work, and I've been spending more time outside after work, doing yard chores and getting the garden ready to plant.

■ I'm saving money on fuel, since I'm not driving nearly 100 miles a day, and I'm also reducing the wear and tear on my vehicle.

■ I'm spending less money on things I don't *really* need, because I go to the store only when I absolutely have to, and I get only the items that are necessary.

■ I'm making time to craft and work on DIY projects, as a way to de-stress. I'm currently in the process of making a family cookbook for a cousin who's getting married later this year.

■ And my favorite thing is getting to spend time with my family, playing cards and board games, having cookouts, and taking rides in the country on the UTVs just to get away from the house for a bit, while still social distancing ourselves from others. We've also gone fishing at the creek, hunting for morels, and looking for deer sheds.

How are you and your family spending your time at home? What are your positives during these challenging times? Send me a note, along with photos (JPEG files, 300 dpi, attached to your email), if you have any. And don't forget to send in your stories and photos for Trash to Treasures and Country Critters!

Until next time,

Traci Smith
Editor-in-Chief
email: TSmith@CappersFarmer.com



Traci

Capper's Farmer

SUMMER ■ 2020

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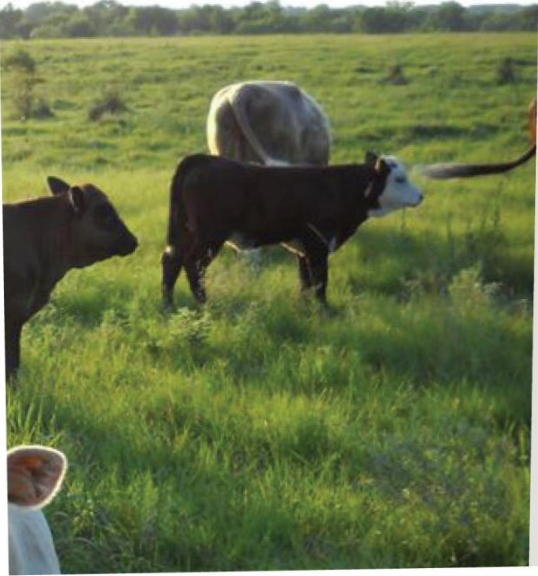
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Country Critters

Snapshots of farm animals in rural Osage County, Kansas.



A young calf sticks close to its mother.



A 2-day-old calf named Snowball.



A flock of country chickens feast on a snack of refreshing watermelon.



A chicken watches over the farm.

Share Your Photos ...

Send us photos of your pets and livestock, and we just might feature them in a future issue of the magazine.

■ Be sure to identify the subjects in the photos, and include a few details, such as the age, breed, name, quirky habits, etc., of the animal.

■ Include your full name and mailing address in the correspondence, and if we use your photos, we'll send you a copy of the issue in which they appear.

■ Email photos (JPEG files, 300 dpi), as attachments (not embedded in the email), to TSmith@CappersFarmer.com. If emailing more than one photo, please attach only one photo per email, as the photo files will be large.

NOTE: Due to the coronavirus pandemic, most of our staff is not in the office at this time, so please email your submissions, rather than sending them via the USPS.



A herd of cows and calves enjoy a nice summer day on a lush green pasture.

Rural Free Delivery

Readers share their thoughts, opinions, projects, and more.

Scent Memories

Cheryl Wipperman
Marshall, Minnesota



I enjoyed reading Rebecca Martin's "Scent of the Cellar" (Editor's Note) in the Fall 2019 issue of *Capper's Farmer*, and it inspired me to share the memory of my favorite scent.

Lilacs bring back wonderful memories of spending every June at my aunt and uncle's farm in Minnesota when I was growing up. They had a beautiful place, with several lilac bushes that were in full bloom when we arrived.

It was a long drive from Fort Bliss, Texas, but I was excited, so I'd stay awake and watch the scenery change from sand and desert to farmland. When I started smelling alfalfa, I knew we were getting close.

The farm was a child's paradise, with ponies, chickens, kittens, baby lambs, lots of pastures to ride in or run through, and a creek to swim in. And the lilac bushes smelled wonderful. I'd stand beside them and take deep breaths, savoring their fabulous scent.

My husband and I now live on a farm in Minnesota, where we have multiple lilac bushes. Every spring, we thoroughly enjoy the peacefulness we feel when the beautiful flowers begin blooming and filling the air with their fragrance, and suddenly all those childhood memories come flooding back.

Weaving Hobby

Jon, the chief cook and farmer at The JAZ Farm
Byers, Colorado

My note is in response to Rebecca Martin's letter, "Love of Weaving" (Editor's Note, Winter 2020), as I too am a weaver.

Let Us Know ...

Got a comment on an article, or an opinion you'd like to share? Want to let us know what kinds of projects you're working on?

Send an email—and photos (JPEG files, 300 dpi, as attachments), if available—with "Rural Free Delivery" in the subject line to TSmith@CappersFarmer.com.

DIY Group ...

Join the *Capper's Farmer* DIY Group on Facebook (www.Facebook.com/Groups/CappersDIY), where you'll find lots of fun and creative craft projects. And don't forget to post photos of your own projects for others to enjoy.

Or, if you'd rather, you can email your projects and photos (JPEG files, 300 dpi, attached to your email), to TSmith@CappersFarmer.com, with "FB DIY Group" in the subject line.

In 2017, I was in search of an indoor hobby to give me something to do when the weather prevented me from working outdoors on the homestead. The hobby also needed to serve a function, in addition to creating the meditative, mind-slowng properties that crafting affords. And because my family is a collection of musicians and artists and crafters, my hobby needed to be something uniquely mine, to avoid the feeling that someone was looking over my shoulder as I learned.

I ended up taking a class through a weaving shop in Boulder, Colorado. After getting over the fear of turning hundreds of threads into nothing but a rat's nest, not being a crafter up to this point, and being the only male in the class, I was hooked.

Schacht Spindle Co. has a loom manufacturing shop in Boulder, and I soon had one of their floor looms in my basement, where I've set up a studio. I can honestly say that designing cloth and making towels, scarves, blankets, runners, and more is as satisfying as building fences and raised garden beds.

This is a craft and hobby I have no intention of giving up anytime soon.

The Good Ol' Days

Stories of being invaded by grasshoppers during the Depression era.

Farm Crops Destroyed

Mary Worley ■ Azalea, Oregon

We lived on a farm during the Depression era, where we raised cattle, grain, hay, chickens, and a garden. Crops in general looked promising, just right for a grasshopper invasion. It was 1936, and my husband and I were newly married.

Medium-sized, brown grasshoppers came in droves, cleaning fields quickly with their voracious appetites. I remember seeing a large field of tall corn devoured in less than a week. Alfalfa was another favorite crop for them. Men worked long hours to put crops in silos to save all they possibly could.

Apples and peaches were eaten from the trees, and holes were eaten in clothing as it hung on the line. Harnesses and pitchforks had to be put inside, as sweat attracted the grasshoppers' appetites, as well.

Farmers tried plowing a strip around their fields, did some burning, and even put out poison mash in a few places. One man herded his flock of 600 turkeys from farm to farm. The turkeys did a good job on the brown grasshoppers, which eventually disappeared.

Big, green grasshoppers then arrived. Most gardens were eaten up, and fodder and hay crops were scant for livestock. Some farmers had no choice but to sell their cattle due to lack of feed.

It was a hard year for farmers, but most survived. Farmers are hopeful souls who push ahead while telling themselves next year will be better.

Devastated By Bugs, Grasshoppers & Drought

Emmett Kirby ■ Champaign, Illinois

As if the chinch bugs weren't bad enough during the Depression era, add to them the grasshoppers—and let's not forget the drought.

I remember my brother and I helping our dad husk corn in a 20-acre field ravaged by drought, chinch bugs, and grasshoppers. We husked every ear we could find, and at the end of the day, we only had a half load of undersized ears of corn, even though we'd covered about 16 acres. In ordinary years, Dad could've husked a full load by himself in half a day.

Grasshoppers even perched upon the handles of tools propped up against the barn, and they gnawed on the wood just enough to roughen the smooth finish, resulting in handles that scraped and scratched bare hands.

True Pioneer Stories ...

Back in 1955, a call went out from the editors of the then *Capper's Weekly* magazine, asking readers to send in articles on true pioneers. Hundreds of letters poured in from early settlers and their children, and from grandchildren of settlers, all with tales to tell. So many letters were received, in fact, that a decision was made to create a book. In 1956, the first *My Folks* title—*My Folks Came in a Covered Wagon*—hit the shelves. Nine other books followed in the *My Folks* series, all of them filled with true tales from our readers.

What you see on this page are stories, or portions of stories, that were printed decades ago, without any fact checking, meaning that all the details may not be accurate, but instead are what was believed to be true by the contributor.

Futile Attempt to Save Lilacs

Mrs. Fred Walter ■ Wallace, Nebraska

Mrs. H. was a tiny woman, but her ambition and courage were unmatched. I remember her well, and I also remember the year of the grasshopper swarms.

Mrs. H. had brought two lilac bushes from her fine home in Virginia to the barren plains of Nebraska when she came in a covered wagon. Many times, she went without a cool drink herself, so her lilacs could have water, and the bushes thrived in spite of hot winds and cold winters.

Then came the terrible grasshopper hordes. They could be heard long before they arrived.

Knowing the hoppers were on their way, Mrs. H. used her only bedspread to cover one of her lilac bushes. To cover the other bush, she used a huge buffalo robe.

As the grasshoppers arrived, they were so thick, they blackened the skies like a storm, and they ate their way through anything and everything.

Just hours after Mrs. H. covered her bushes, she went out to find everything gone—the robe, the bedspread, and her cherished lilac bushes. Only bare stumps were left in the ravaged earth.

The next spring, however, the lilacs surprisingly came up from the roots, and they were more beautiful than ever.

Trash to Treasures

John and Lindsey Corn share projects that give new life to old items.

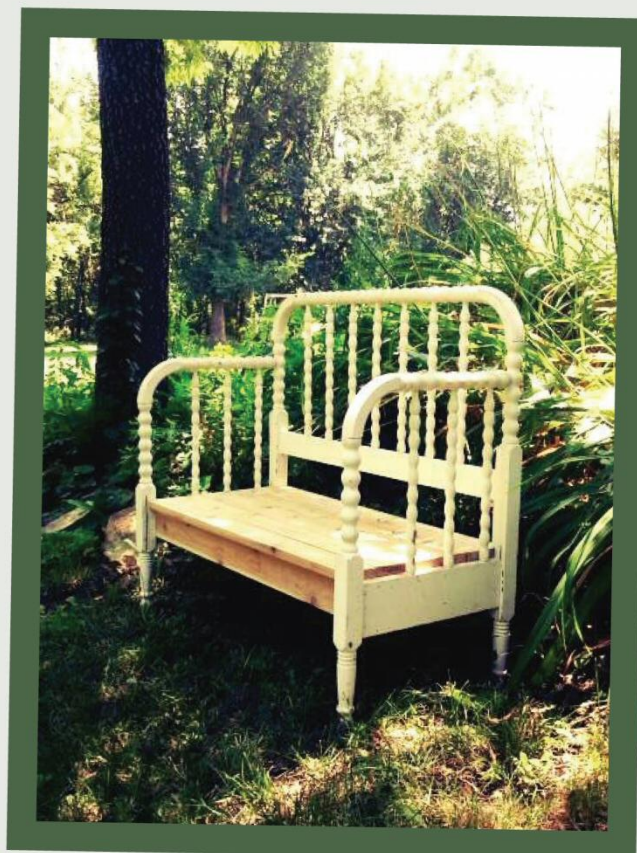


◀ Wood Rack

John came across an old wagon wheel on our property in Centerview, Missouri. He cut it in half, and then welded two legs onto the bottom of it, using an old pipe he had.

Garden Bench ▶

Our neighbors set an old twin bed frame out for trash, so we decided to make a bench for the garden with it. We used the headboard for the back, cut the footboard in half for the side arms, and used pallet wood to create the seat. We liked the antique look of the frame, so we didn't paint it, but we did add a sealer.



Nightstands ▼

We found this vintage desk in my parents' basement. We took off the desk's top, removed the center drawer, sanded and painted the outer drawer sections, and then cut and sealed pallet boards, which we attached to the tops of the outer drawer sections.



Before



After



▲ Bathroom Vanity

We bought the dresser for \$20 at a thrift store, and the sink on clearance at a hardware store. We cut the hole for the sink, reworked the drawers to create a slight notch so they'd go around the plumbing, painted it, added multiple coats of heavy-duty sealer to make it waterproof, and then added the faucet. The drawers are still fully functional.

Share Your Projects ...

Send us photos of your recycled, repurposed DIY projects, and we just might feature them in a future issue of the magazine.

■ Be sure to include a description of the project, such as:

- What the project is.
- Where the materials came from.
- What you had to do to make it into the "new" item (disassemble it, cut it, sand it, paint or stain it, seal it, add pulls or handles to it, etc.).
- An explanation of what gave you the idea to create this particular item.

■ Send "before" and "after" photos, if you have them.

■ Include your full name and mailing address in the correspondence, and if we use your photos, we'll send you a copy of the issue in which they appear.

■ Email your photos (JPEG files, 300 dpi, as attachments to the email) to TSmith@CappersFarmer.com. If you're emailing more than one photo, please attach only one photo per email, as the photo files will be large.

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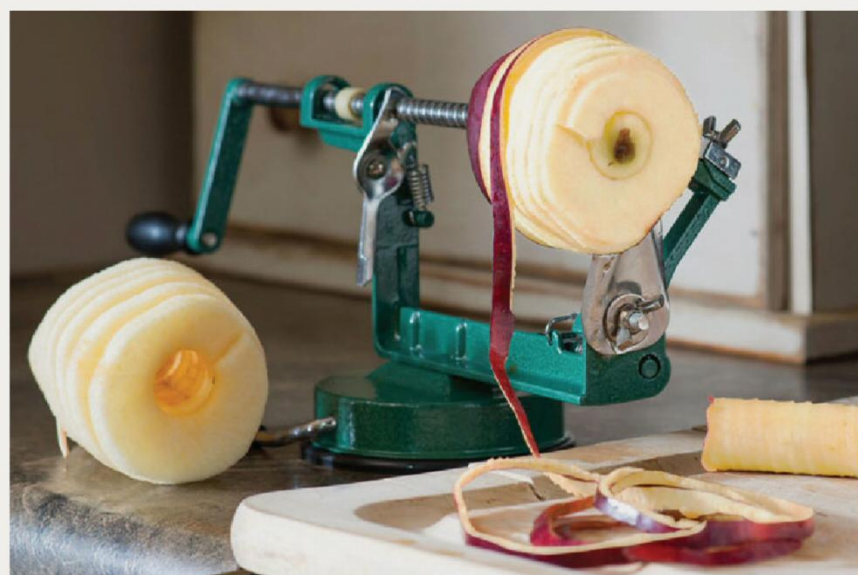
General Store

Useful and practical products for the homestead.

Durable Peeler

Available at Store.CappersFarmer.com

\$26



The **Apple & Potato Peeler** takes the work out of preparing apples and potatoes for your favorite recipes. Quickly peel, slice, and core an apple in one easy motion. You can just peel or just slice and core, depending on your needs. Made of cast aluminum with a stainless steel blade, the peeler is equipped with an ergonomic handle, making it comfortable and easy to use. It also features a suction cup on the base for stability.

The peeler is lightweight, yet sturdy, and is easy to use. It has a great suction cup that mounts to any flat surface (and releases easily). It makes quick work of peeling and slicing, and it's simple to clean and store.—Editors

Heavy-Duty Disposable Gloves

Available at [Amazon](https://Amazon.com), [Lowe's](https://Lowe.com), [Walmart](https://Walmart.com), and more.

\$20

Venom Steel Nitrile Rubber Gloves feature heavy-duty, 6-mil, two-layer black and white nitrile integration, creating a glove construction that provides incredible resistance to rips, tears, punctures, and chemicals. The gloves are 70 percent thicker than ordinary disposable exam gloves, making them a great choice for cleaning, gardening, DIY projects, mechanic work, and more. And, unlike latex gloves, Venom Steel gloves are latex-free and powder-free, and they're also fully textured for a better grip.

The gloves are available in multiple sizes, to fit anyone's hands.



These gloves are extremely tough. The thick, double layer of material makes them ideal for working on vehicles/equipment, DIY projects, and for use in the garden. Great value and quality.—Editors

Garden Gear

Available at www.Gardeners.com.

\$53 to \$159

■ The **Garden Row Snip-n-Drip Soaker System** lets you apply water where you want it, and not where you don't. Customize the hose system to suit your garden (up to four 25-foot rows). Simply use scissors to cut the hoses to the sizes you need, snap the fittings in place, and you're ready to water. The system includes 100 feet of ½-inch soaker hose, 25 feet of ½-inch garden hose, a faucet adapter, a quick-connect coupler, a hose coupler, a pressure regulator, three 3-way hose couplers, and four end plugs.

■ The **Crop Cage** ensures protection from birds, rabbits, and deer. It's constructed with a powder-coated steel frame for stability, stands 6 feet tall, and features zippered doors that allow users to walk inside to tend plants and harvest produce. The assembled crop cage measures 4 feet wide by 12 feet long. The lightweight cage is easy to assemble, and easy to take down and store during the off-season. In addition, the steel tube construction allows the assembled crop cage to be moved easily.

NOTE: Gardener's Supply Co. notes that when installing the cage, it's imperative to make sure the tubes are fully seated into the connectors, or the netting cover won't fit correctly.



The soaker system is simple to set up, works great, and makes watering easier than ever. It's ideal for both garden plots and raised beds, and it's the perfect watering solution for vegetable gardens, as well as flower beds.

The crop cage is large and sturdy. The netting and overall setup is tight and secure, to keep critters at bay. The zippered doors make getting in and out of the cage easy, and it's great being able to stand and move around freely while tending plants.

—Editors

DIY Power Tools

Available wherever **DeWALT** products are sold.

\$249 to \$299

DeWALT has upgraded three products that were part of the original FLEXVOLT system that debuted in 2016. The new 60V MAX FLEXVOLT **Circular Saw** (DCS578), **4½- to 6-Inch Grinder** (DCG418), and **Reciprocating Saw** (DCS389) each offer increased power versus their predecessors.

The tools achieve their increase in performance via new motors, software, and controls. In addition, the kitted tools comes with a 9.0Ah battery, an upgrade from the 6.0Ah battery that was standard with the original FLEXVOLT tool kits.

These upgrades mean the circular saw is 47 percent more powerful than its original version, the grinder is 30 percent more powerful, and the reciprocating saw has 19 percent greater power.

These tools, along with all the other 60V MAX tools from DeWALT, offer users the power of corded with the freedom of cordless.



The folks at DeWALT have done it again! These tools are even better than their original versions. The upgraded tools are still easy to operate, but now they have even more power and longer running time. They're perfect for all kinds of jobs around the house, whether for remodeling, repairing, or for DIY projects.—Editors

A photograph of three tote bags hanging from a rustic wooden rack. The bags are made of a textured fabric, likely linen or cotton, and come in three colors: grey, beige, and white. They are hanging against a plain white wall. The text 'Cool Kitchen Accessories' is overlaid on the image in a stylized font.

Cool Kitchen *Accessories*

Save money with these do-it-yourself food wraps and market totes.

Article and photos by Lisa Bass

I find freedom in a simple and minimal lifestyle. Freedom to live on a little less, and to have the time and resources to enjoy the simple things in life a little more. I hope my passion for creativity and hand-crafting will inspire you to create a home and lifestyle that you love too. 🌿

Lisa Bass developed a passion for a simple lifestyle after becoming a mom in 2008, and started her blog, Farmhouse on Boone (www.FarmhouseOnBoone.com), in 2015. She lives with her husband and five kids in Troy, Missouri. This article is excerpted with permission from her book, *Simple Farmhouse Life* (Lyons Press).

Simple Linen Market Tote

You can never have too many tote bags, especially when they're pretty! I like to stick to colors that fit in with my home décor, so I don't mind them hanging in the mudroom, waiting to be used.

The finished dimensions of this tote are 16½ inches by 15 inches, plus the straps, approximately 13½ inches long.

Tools & Materials

- Scissors
- Measuring tape
- Sewing machine
- Iron
- Linen or linen-blend fabric (1 yard)
- Safety pin
- Stick pins

Instructions

1 Cut two pieces of fabric 4 inches by 28 inches, for the straps. Cut two pieces 16 inches by 18 inches, for the main piece.

2 Fold one strap piece in half, all the way down the long side, right sides together, and sew a ¼-inch seam. Leave the two ends open. Using a large safety pin at one corner, turn the strap right-side-out, and press the seam flat. Topstitch along the two long sides with a very narrow seam. Repeat with the other strap piece.

3 With right sides together, sew the two main pieces together with a ½-inch seam. Finish the raw edges with a serger or zigzag stitch. Turn the bag right-side-out. Fold the top edge of the bag down 1 inch to the inside of the bag, and press in place. Fold it one more time, to hide the raw edges inside, and press in place.

4 Place the raw edges of one strap under the pressed fold at the top of the bag, on the front side, and pin in place. (The outer edges of the strap should be placed 3½ inches from each side seam, so the distance between the inner edges is 6½ inches.) Repeat with the other strap, on the back of the bag.

5 Sew the top hem of the bag in place, catching the straps as you go. Fold the straps up, away from the bag, and topstitch around the bag opening, ¼-inch from the top.

Beeswax Food Wraps

Glass storage containers and a small collection of beeswax wraps are all you need for all-natural food storage. As a reusable alternative to plastic wrap, these wraps are perfect to throw over a plate or bowl that doesn't have a lid. The beeswax on the fabric creates an airtight seal, so the food inside stays fresher, longer.

Use the wraps for sandwiches, blocks of cheese, sliced vegetables and fruits, and more. You can mold the wraps with the heat of your hand to conform around any plate, cup, or food item, and they'll hold their shape as they cool.

To clean the wraps, wash them in cold water with a mild soap. Never wash the wraps using hot water, as

the beeswax will melt and break the airtight seal on the fabric.

These instructions will make five wraps, each measuring 12 inches square. They'll last for up to a year.

Tools & Materials

- Baking sheet
- Parchment paper
- Scissors
- Measuring tape
- 100 percent cotton fabric (1 yard)
- Grated beeswax (5 ounces)
- Paintbrush
- Large button and jute twine, optional

Instructions

- 1 Preheat oven to 170 F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
- 2 Cut five 12-by-12-inch squares from the fabric.
- 3 Place one fabric square on the baking sheet. Sprinkle it with 1 ounce of grated beeswax. Bake for 7 minutes, or until the wax is melted. Spread melted wax around the fabric with a paintbrush, covering any spots that aren't coated. Return to the oven for another 1 to 2 minutes to ensure that everything is melted evenly.
- 4 Immediately remove the fabric from the baking sheet, and hang it on a clothesline for a few minutes, or until the wax has fully hardened.
- 5 Repeat Steps 3 and 4 with the remaining fabric squares.

NOTE: To create an airtight sandwich storage bag, sew a large button near the top center area of the wrap. Fold the wrap around the sandwich, and secure it shut with jute twine.





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Fix, Freeze & Feast

Discover recipes that
make it easy to stock
your freezer with
ready-to-cook meals.

By Kati Neville and Lindsay Ahrens

WITH these recipes, you get great-tasting, nutritious meals that won't break the bank or interfere with your busy schedule. If you cook one recipe in bulk, you can stock your freezer with three nights of homemade dinners for your family. This way of cooking saves both time and money, and best of all, it means your menu will include delicious, home-cooked meals every night of the week. 🌿

SEE RECIPES ON PAGES 16-17

Kati Neville lives in Oregon, and **Lindsay Ahrens** lives in Washington. Both are big fans of freezer meals and have written recipes for Costco's annual cookbooks and articles for *Everyday with Rachael Ray*. This is excerpted with permission from their book *Fix, Freeze, Feast* (Storey Publishing).

Beef & Bow Tie Soup

Yields 3 freezer meals, each with 6 servings.

To package this recipe, you'll need six 1-gallon freezer bags (three with labels) and three 1-quart freezer bags.

3 pounds ground beef
6 cups sliced carrots (about 12 medium-sized carrots)
4½ cups sliced celery (about 9 medium-sized stalks)
3 cups chopped onion (about 3 small onions)
3 cans (15 ounces each) tomato sauce
3 cans (14½ ounces each) diced tomatoes
3 teaspoons dried oregano
3 teaspoons dried parsley
1½ teaspoons salt
¾ teaspoon black pepper
1 pound mini bow ties (farfalle) or other small pasta, cooked and cooled
Grated Parmesan cheese, optional



❶ In a large skillet or pot, brown beef over medium heat until no longer pink, about 15 minutes, breaking it into crumbles as it cooks. Drain if beef produces excess grease. Cool.

❷ Divide beef evenly among the unlabeled 1-gallon freezer bags.

❸ Into each bag of beef, add 2

cups carrots, 1½ cups celery, 1 cup onion, 1 can tomato sauce, 1 can diced tomatoes, 1 teaspoon oregano, 1 teaspoon parsley, ½ teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon black pepper. Seal.

❹ Divide cooked pasta evenly among the 1-quart freezer bags, and seal.

❺ Place a bag of soup mix and a bag of pasta into each labeled 1-gallon freezer bag, and seal.

❻ Freeze for up to 4 months.

TO COOK ONE FREEZER MEAL:

❶ Place one package frozen or thawed soup mix in a slow cooker. Set pasta aside.

❷ Add 4 cups water to slow cooker. Cover with lid.

❸ Cook on low for 6 to 8 hours, or on high for 3 to 4 hours.

❹ Stir in pasta, and cook for an addition few minutes, or until soup is heated through.

❺ Serve hot, sprinkled with Parmesan cheese, if desired.

Sticky Ribs

Yields 3 freezer meals, each with 6 servings.

To package this recipe, you'll need three 1-gallon freezer bags with labels.

9 pounds boneless country-style ribs
2¼ cups packed brown sugar
3 cups water
¾ cup soy sauce
3 tablespoons minced garlic

❶ Place ribs in a large stockpot, and cover with water. Simmer until tender, about 1 hour. Drain.

❷ Divide ribs evenly among freezer bags.

❸ Into each bag, add ¾ cup brown sugar, 1 cup water, ¼ cup soy sauce, and 1 tablespoon garlic. Seal. Gently shake each bag to combine contents.

❹ Freeze for up to 3 months.



TO COOK ONE FREEZER MEAL:

❶ Move one meal into the refrigerator until it completely thaws.

❷ Preheat oven to 350 F.

❸ Pour ribs and sauce into an ungreased baking dish, and bake, uncovered, for about 1 hour, or until sauce is thick and sticky.

Chicken Parmigiana

Yields 3 freezer meals, each with 4 servings.

To package this recipe, you'll need three 1-quart freezer bags, plastic wrap, three 1-gallon freezer bags with labels, and wax paper or parchment paper.

1 cup all-purpose flour
4 eggs, lightly beaten
2 cups dry breadcrumbs
12 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves (about 6 pounds)
12 slices mozzarella cheese
6 cups prepared basic red sauce

① Place flour in a shallow dish, eggs in another shallow dish, and breadcrumbs in a third shallow dish. Set them aside.

② Lay a piece of chicken, smooth side down, on a cutting board, and press down on the thickest part with the palm of your hand to make it thinner. Coat it

with flour, dip it in egg, and then coat it with breadcrumbs. Place it on a rimmed baking sheet. Repeat with remaining chicken pieces.

③ When all the chicken pieces are coated, place the baking sheets in the freezer for 1 hour.

④ Pour 2 cups red sauce in each 1-quart freezer bag, and seal.

⑤ Divide cheese into portions of



4 slices each. Wrap each portion in plastic wrap.

⑥ Place 4 frozen chicken pieces in each 1-gallon freezer bag, placing a piece of wax paper or parchment paper between each piece.

⑦ Place a bag of sauce and a packet of cheese into each bag of chicken. Seal.

⑧ Freeze for up to 3 months.

To Cook One Freezer Meal:

① Move one meal into the refrigerator until it completely thaws.

② Preheat oven to 375 F.

③ Place chicken pieces in a greased baking dish, and bake, uncovered, for 20 minutes.

④ Pour red sauce evenly over each piece of chicken, and bake for another 10 minutes, or until chicken pieces reach an internal temperature of 165 F.

⑤ Top each piece of chicken with a slice of cheese, and return to the oven until melted.

ALEXANDRA GRABLEWSKI

Pure Survival Water



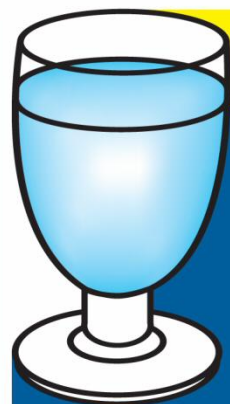
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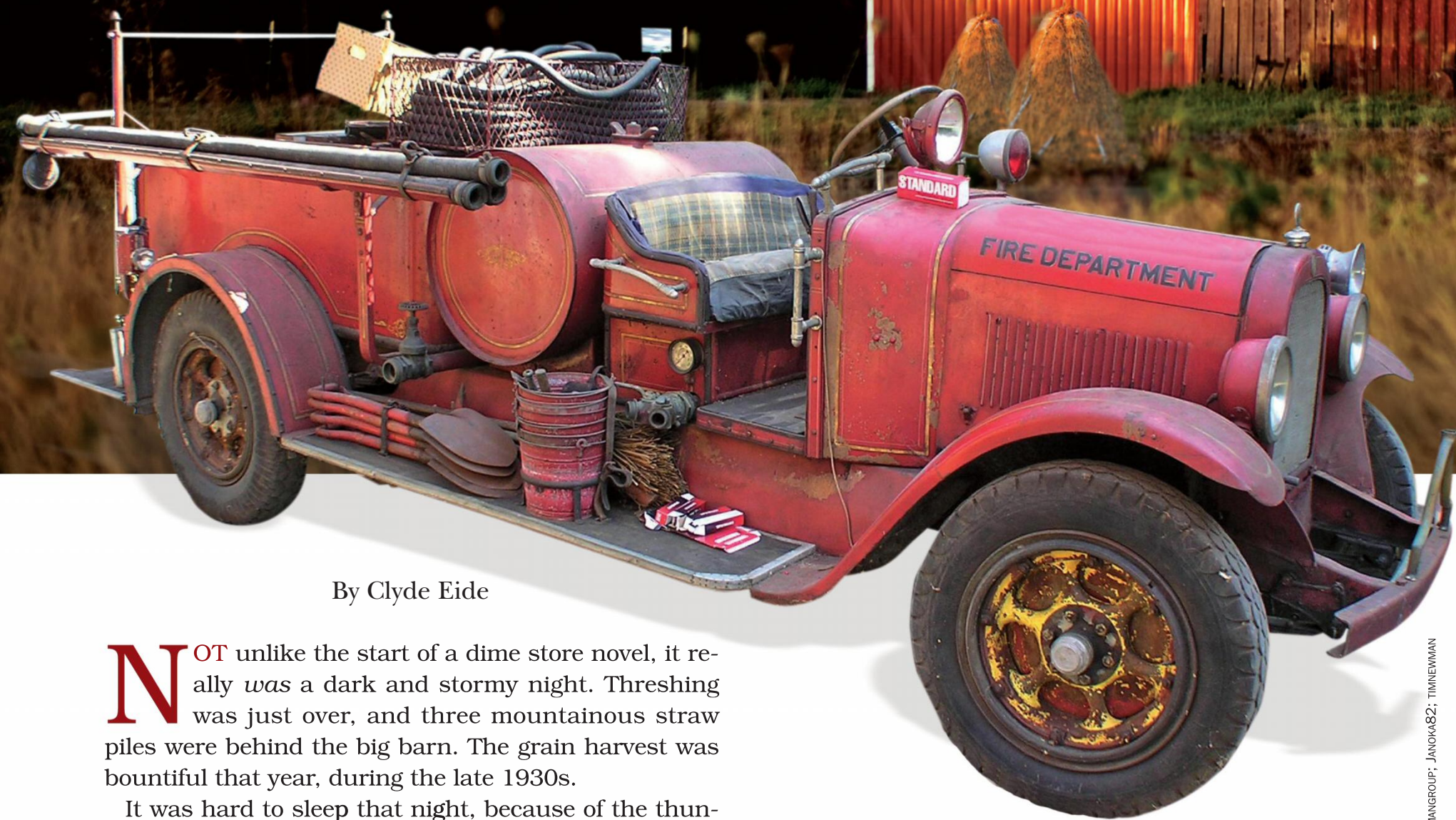
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A Night to REMEMBER

Fire sparked by a bolt
of lightning threatens
farm family's barn.



By Clyde Eide

NOT unlike the start of a dime store novel, it really *was* a dark and stormy night. Threshing was just over, and three mountainous straw piles were behind the big barn. The grain harvest was bountiful that year, during the late 1930s.

It was hard to sleep that night, because of the thunder and lightning. Suddenly, an extremely loud boom rattled the house. Shortly thereafter, we heard a furious honking coming from the driveway. Aunt Stell stuck her head out the window and shouted, "What is it?" A loud voice yelled back, "Your straw pile is on fire!"

It was Rasche, the new butcher in our little town of Capron, Illinois. He was on his way home from the big city of Harvard, with a population then of about 5,000, when he saw a lightning bolt strike one of the straw

piles as he was driving across the flats—what we called the prairie to the east.

I got up and looked outside. The barn was juxtaposed against an eerie red glow. Uncle Amos and Uncle Everett were already getting buckets of water from the big stock tank. They futilely tossed the water at the growing inferno.

If it had just been a straw pile, they would've let it



“The fire's deep inside. We'll have to upset the straw pile to get at it,” the Harvard chief said. “Get two big tractors. We'll pull a cable through it.”

burn, but sparks were blowing directly toward the barn. Someone hollered out to call the Capron Fire Department. It was a volunteer group, and my Uncle Jerome was the fire chief.

Illuminated by lightning, a surprising sight unfolded outside the kitchen window. My older sister, Allene, was leading the draft horses to the small pasture in the orchard. She was determined to make sure no horses were in the barn if it burned. This would've been a dangerous job for a man, let alone a teenage girl, because horses can be unpredictable in a storm, and even more so with a fire nearby.

After what seemed like forever, Uncle Jerome called and said they couldn't get the old Model T firetruck started, and told us to call the Harvard Fire Department. Harvard was in McHenry County, and Capron was in Boone County. Part of the farm was in each, so taxes were paid to both counties.

The Harvard Fire Department arrived quickly. Their

big pumper truck had a small tank of water, which they exhausted in no time. They then put a suction line in the stock tank. Even with the pump jack refilling the tank, that source was also rapidly drained.

About then, the Capron Fire Department arrived. To solve the water problem, they decided to build a mud dam across a nearby creek. But even with that water supply available, every time they thought they had the fire under control, it would blaze up again. “The fire's deep inside. We'll have to upset the straw pile to get at it,” the Harvard chief said. “Get two big tractors. We'll pull a cable through it.”

Uncle Amos got out the McCormick-Deering 15-30. Uncle Jerome asked Frank Nettleton, who was in charge of the Boone County road equipment for that area, to get the big Caterpillar. I don't know what size that crawler was, but it had a fully enclosed cab, and it kept Frank dry. Uncle Amos, who was already soaked, got even wetter on the 15-30.

They ran a steel cable around the straw pile, hooked the 15-30 to one end and the Cat to the other. It was as though the two tractors were having a tug-of-war. The 15-30 spun its lugged wheels and yawed back and forth. The big Cat slowly pulled the cable through the straw pile. The fire flared up at that point, but the firemen were ready and waiting to douse it. Soon, the fire was tapped out.

Meanwhile, someone drove Aunt Gine to the general store in Capron, where she worked, and she opened the place up and gathered every doughnut they had. At the same time, Grandma Johnson was vigorously turning the handle to the coffee grinder, which was attached to the kitchen wall, and the vibrations reverberated through the house.

After the firemen secured their gear, they were invited into the house for coffee and doughnuts. It was like the big threshing dinner all over again, except this time it was 3 a.m. They joked and told stories, and by the time they left, it was time for Uncle Amos and Uncle Everett to start the milking chores. The rest of us got to go to bed and get a few hours of sleep.

Later that day, Uncle Everett got a hay wagon and started loading up what was left of the still-smoldering straw pile. He hauled it back to the same field it came from, and spread it out as best he could. Fortunately, the barn was still there, the grain was in the bins, and no one was hurt.

While this was a scary event, a few good things came of it. Capron got a new firetruck, the farm's lightning rods were inspected, and straw piles were never again set that close to the barn. 🌩️

Clyde Eide lives in Texas. He shares remembrances of growing up on the farm whenever he can.

Rustic WOOD Projects

Recycle wooden planks into a child's growth chart and a barn quilt.



Article and photos by Carrie Spalding

WHETHER you want to add rustic charm to your own home, or you want to share your creativity with others, these projects are ideal for anyone who likes country décor. The growth chart is easy enough for beginners to make, but the barn quilt requires a bit more experience. 🌲

Carrie Spalding discovered the power of do-it-yourself projects years ago, when she moved into a 1970s brick ranch in need of updating. She shares her DIY adventures on her blog, *Lovely Etc.* (www.LovelyEtc.com). This article is excerpted with permission from her book, *Wood Plank Projects* (Skyhorse Publishing).

Wooden Arrow Growth Chart

This growth chart is the perfect way to keep track of your growing family, and it's stylish enough to use in a bedroom or the living room. Best of all, you can easily pack it up and take it with you anytime you move, unlike measurements you mark on a doorway.

The finished project is 6½ feet high and 11¼ inches wide at the widest part of the arrowhead and the arrow's tail. The arrowhead is 14 inches tall, the tail section is 15 inches long, and the body of the arrow is 5 inches wide.

Tools & Materials

- Jigsaw
- Tape measure
- Safety glasses
- Hearing protection
- Pencil
- Straight edge
- 1x12 pine board, 8 feet long
- 100-grit and 220-grit sandpaper
- Paintbrush
- Clean rags
- White paint
- Dark stain
- Mineral spirits
- Printout of numbers
- Black oil-based paint marker
- Command picture hanging strips

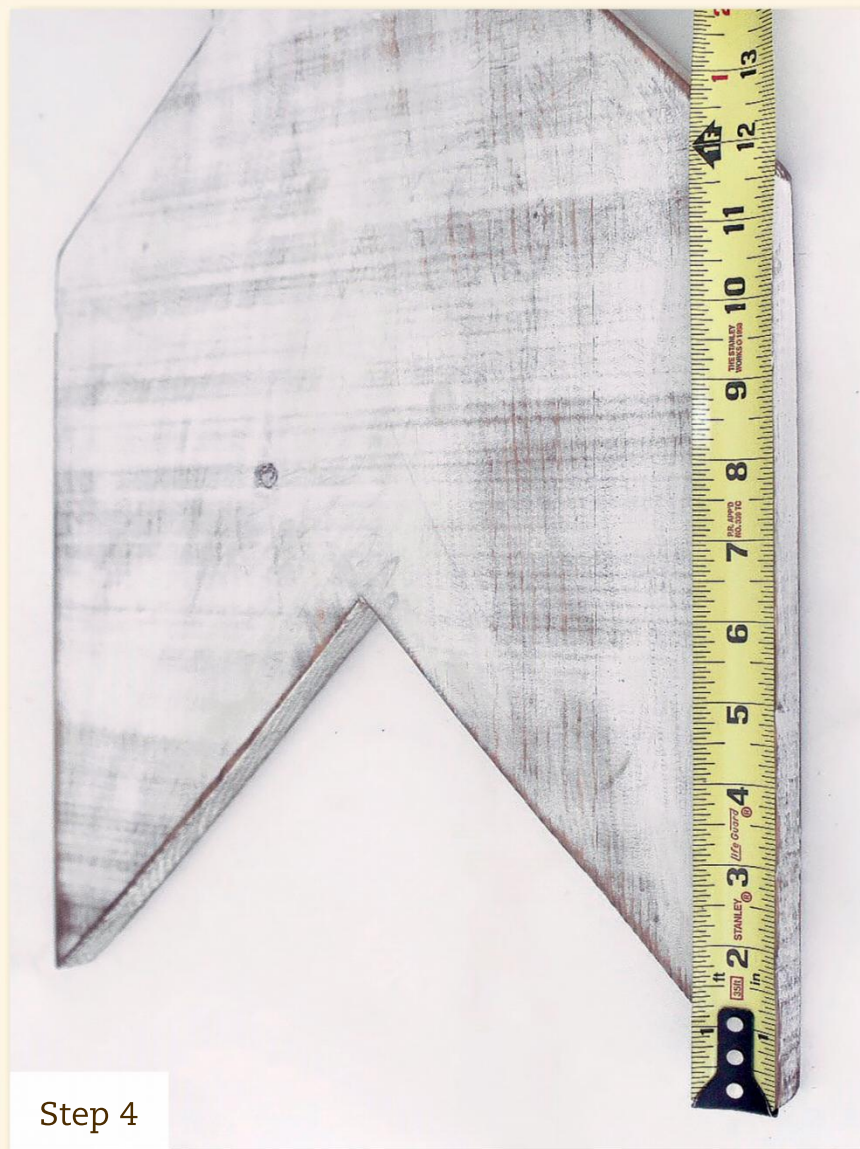
Instructions

① Draw an arrow shape (according to the dimensions above) onto the pine board using a pencil and a straight edge. Cut it out with a jigsaw, and sand any rough edges smooth.

② Lean your arrow against a wall to make sure it's straight. If it's a bit crooked, trim a small amount off one of the tails until it stands straight.

③ Paint the entire arrow with a coat of white paint, and let it dry completely. Lightly sand the arrow with 100-grit sandpaper to expose some of the raw wood and wood grain. Use a clean rag to apply a coat of dark stain. Then, pour a little mineral spirits onto another





Step 4



Step 6

clean rag, and wipe off as much stain as possible. Make sure to use a clean section of the rag each time you wipe it.

NOTE: If you don't want the rustic weathered look, you can simply paint or stain the arrow with whatever color you like.

④ Starting at the bottom of the arrow, mark every 12 inches using a tape measure and a pencil.

⑤ Using the printouts of the numbers, do a simple pencil transfer. To do this, rub pencil all over the back of each number, and then carefully tape the printout, front-side up, onto the arrow where you want them placed. Then, trace over each number with the pencil,

pressing firmly. When you remove the paper printout, you'll see a faint pencil outline of the number.

NOTE: Alternatively, you can either draw the numbers freehand, or you can use stencils to transfer them onto the wood.

⑥ Use a black oil-based paint marker to fill in each number, and then draw tick marks next to each number at the exact measurement mark. Let the paint dry, and then sand the numbers lightly with 220-grit sandpaper to soften the look of the black paint.

⑦ Decide where you want to put the arrow, and then secure it to the wall with Command picture hanging strips to prevent it from tipping.

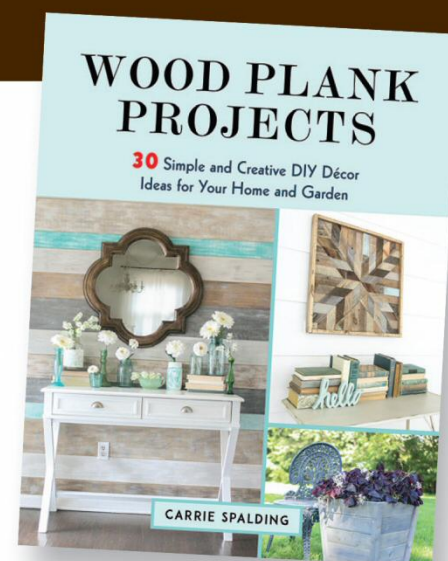


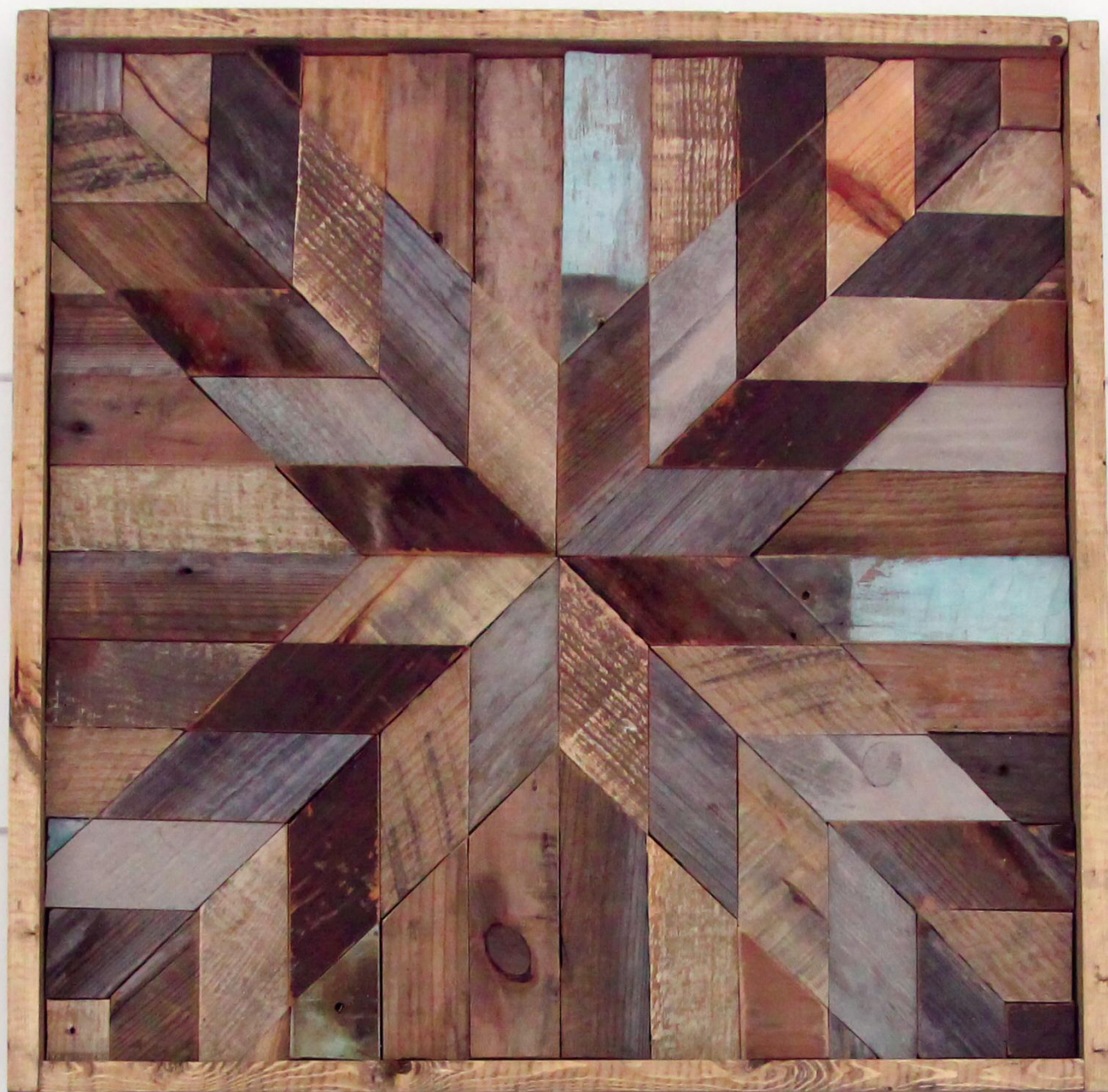
Wood Plank Projects

30 Simple and Creative DIY Décor Ideas for Your Home and Garden

Want to make a statement in your home? Look no further than the humble yet versatile wood plank! Reclaim, recycle, and repurpose wood planks to create unique, stylish pieces. Featuring 30 DIY tutorials for both indoors and outdoors, *Wood Plank Projects* includes simple beginner projects that'll be ready in an hour, as well as larger and more impressive pieces.

This title is available at Store.CappersFarmer.com or by calling 800-678-4883. Mention promo code MCFPAKZ5. Item #9792.





Rustic Barnwood Quilt

If you drive along country roads in some parts of the United States, you may see big painted wooden quilt squares hanging on old barns. This smaller barnwood

quilt is inspired by those old wood quilts. This quilt square gets its beauty from using a combination of reclaimed wood with different finishes and textures. The finished project will measure 25½ inches square.

Tools & Materials

- Tape measure
- Miter saw
- Jigsaw
- Hammer or nail gun
- Safety glasses
- Hearing protection
- Pencil
- Various scrap pieces of reclaimed wood planks (1-by-4-inch works great)

- ¼-inch plywood, 2 feet by 2 feet
- 100-grit sandpaper
- Wood glue
- 1x2 furring strips (2 pieces 24 inches long and 2 pieces 25½ inches long)
- Paintbrush and paint, optional
- Clean rag and stain, optional
- Finishing nails
- Sawtooth picture hanger

Instructions

1 Gather your reclaimed wood planks. Choose a variety of different wood tones and finishes. You can use wood that's of the same thickness for a uniform surface, or you can opt for woods of varying thicknesses to give the final piece depth and texture.

NOTE: If you don't have many varied finishes or wood types, you can create your own variety by staining and painting different pieces in different ways. You can choose to include painted wood pieces or stick with only stained and natural wood.

2 On the plywood, which will form the base of the barn quilt, measure and draw a vertical straight line down the center. Repeat in the opposite direction to draw another line, this time horizontal, so that the plywood is divided into four equal sections.

3 If your wood planks vary in widths, cut them all down to 3½ inches.

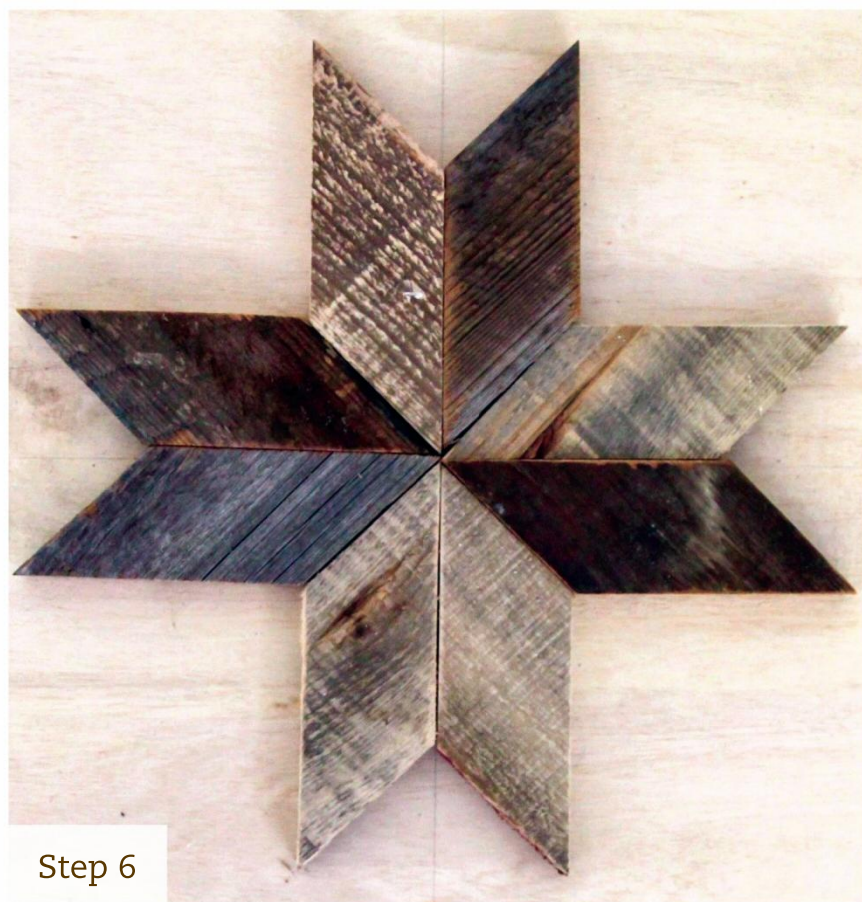
4 Set your miter saw to 45 degrees, and make a cut at one end across the width of the wood plank. After the first cut, move your plank down 3 inches, and make another parallel cut. Continue to do this until you reach the end of the board, or you have enough pieces of that type of wood. You'll need 40 pieces cut to this size, which will later form the "X" in the center of the quilt.

5 Cut scraps of wood to 2 inches wide. Then, make the same 45-degree angle cut at one end. You'll need 24 pieces of this shape. Make 8 pieces 8 inches long, 8 pieces 6 inches long, and 8 pieces 4 inches long. Sand off any rough edges. These pieces will form the sides that surround the "X."

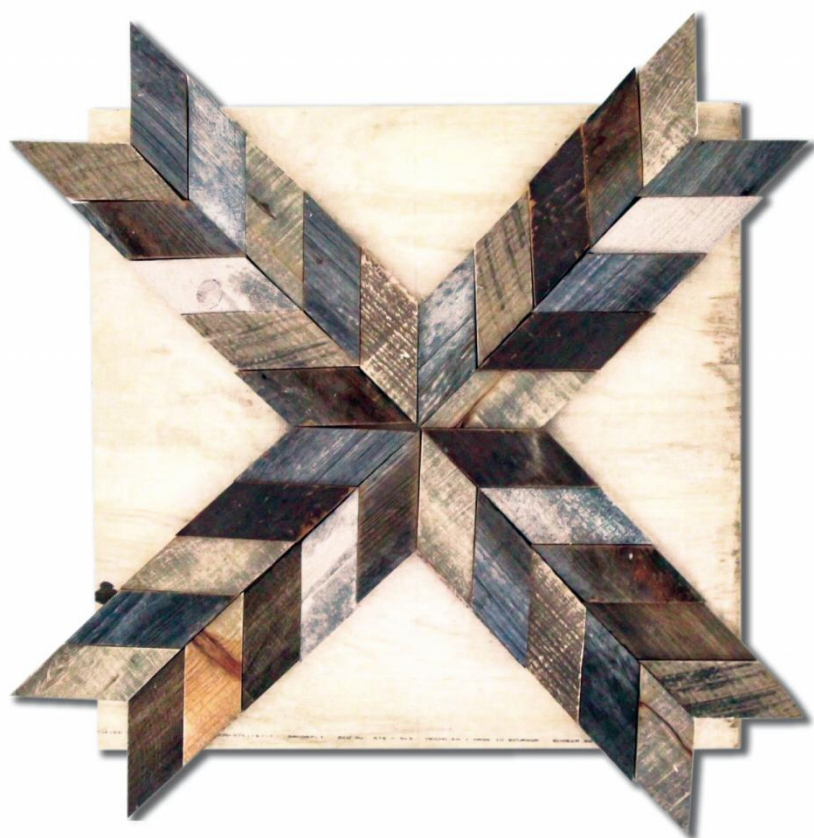
6 On the plywood, lay out 8 of the 40 quadrilateral pieces you cut in Step 4, lining them up with the vertical and horizontal lines you drew on the plywood in Step 2. Make sure to vary the finishes.

7 Lay out the remaining 32 quadrilateral pieces from Step 4 on the plywood to form an "X," making sure to vary the finishes as you arrange them.

8 Once you have a layout you're happy with, glue the wood pieces to the plywood one at a time. When you get near the edges of the board, you'll need to use a pencil to mark the excess that needs to be cut off, and then carefully cut it with a jigsaw.



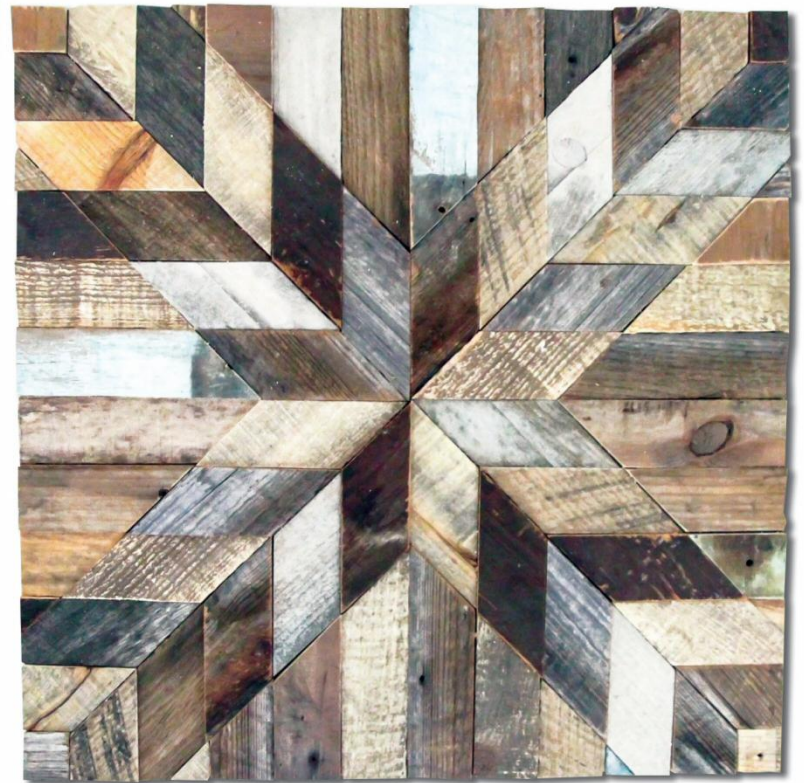
Step 6



Step 7



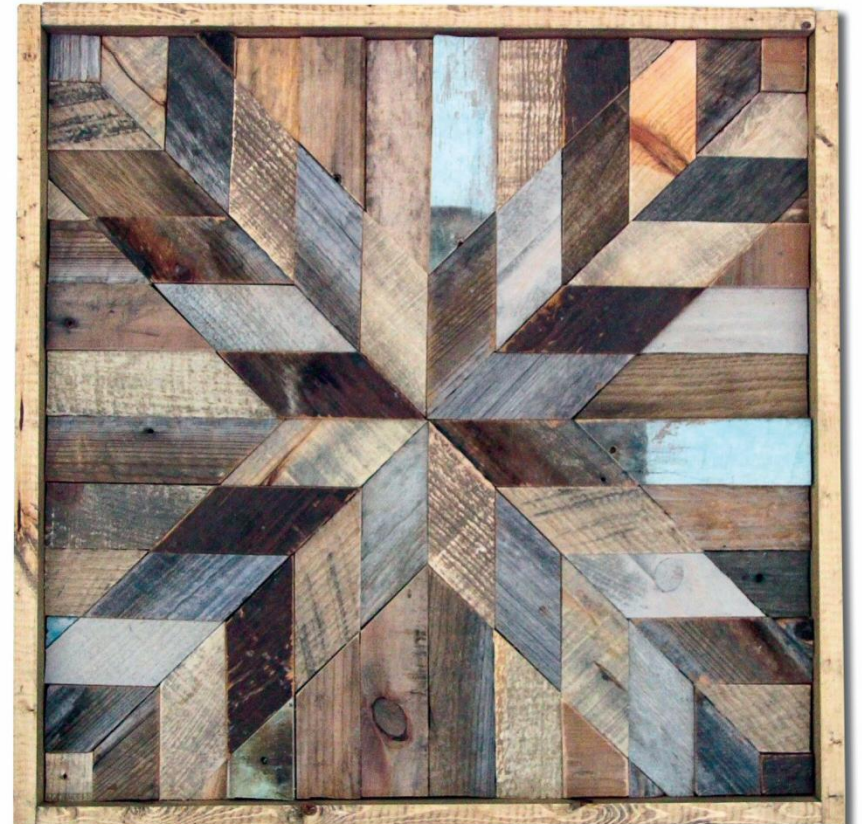
Step 9



Step 11



Step 13



Step 14

9 With the 24 pieces you cut in Step 5, arrange them around the “X” until you’re happy with the look.

10 Before you glue each piece down, mark where it needs to be cut in order to line up with the edges of the plywood, and then cut it with a jigsaw.

11 Now you’ll need to cut a few small triangles and squares to fill in the gaps in the square. (Although it’s tempting to try to cut them from small scraps of wood, it’s extremely difficult to do, so you’re better off to cut them from larger pieces of wood using the miter saw or jigsaw.) Once they’re all cut, sand off any rough edges, and then attach them to the plywood with glue.

12 Sand the rough edges on all of the furring strips,

and then finish them with a stain or paint of your choice. (This frame is finished with Minwax Special Walnut 224 stain.)

13 Line one of the shorter furring strips up with one side of your quilt, and attach it with a couple of finishing nails. Attach the other shorter piece to the opposite side of the quilt.

14 Use finishing nails to attach the remaining furring strips to the opposite sides, completing the frame. Use a little wood glue, along with a couple of nails, in each corner to keep everything secure.

15 Attach a sawtooth picture hanger to the back of the project, and hang it up in your desired location.



Summer GARDEN TIPS

Follow these guidelines for a happy, healthy, and productive garden.

By Melodie Metje

TO keep a garden thriving, you need to make sure your plants are happy and healthy. Here are a few simple things you can do to ensure a successful summer harvest.

HARVEST OFTEN: Plants are in the business of reproducing. That means, the more you harvest, the more the plant will produce. Harvest in the morning for peak juiciness.

MULCH BEDS: Mulch keeps moisture in the soil from evaporating, which means less frequent watering. It also moderates the temperature of the soil, so it doesn't get stifling hot. I use mulch in my garden beds, as well as in my pots.

WATER CONSISTENTLY: Once a week, in-ground plants need either a good soaking rain or a good watering. I use soaker hoses in my mulched garden beds. (A word of caution here. Make sure you don't water the foliage of nightshade plants, because they're susceptible to fungal diseases, and water on their leaves encourages fungal growth.) For plants in pots, you'll likely need to water three times per week during the height of summer heat. (I prefer pots with a water reservoir built into the bottom.) Also, it's always best to water in the morning, when it's cool, so the heat and sun don't cause the water to evaporate before the plants can absorb it.

FERTILIZE MONTHLY: Fertilize once a month with a side-dressing of compost. It's also a good idea to add minerals to the soil. You can purchase minerals just for

gardening. You can also use kelp or seaweed as a fertilizer, which also adds other nutrients. If your plants have more minerals, their fruits will too!

MANAGE INSECTS: Keep a close eye on your plants, so you can stop an insect infestation before it gets started. I pick off bugs daily. If I do get an infestation, I use diatomaceous earth (DE), which is chemical-free, nontoxic, and considered organic. It works by scratching the exoskeleton of the insects, which leads to dehydration and death. Be careful, though, as DE will kill good bugs too. I use it sparingly, and only if I absolutely have to. Another option is light covers, which will help keep bugs off of your plants.

GROOM DISEASED LEAVES: Remove any diseased leaves from your plants. It's said that diseases can be killed if your compost pile is hot enough, but I haven't progressed far enough yet in my composting skills to trust that I'm getting the pile hot enough, so I don't compost the diseased leaves, as I don't want to take the chance of disease spreading to all of my plants.

COMPOST: Start a compost pile outdoors, or get an indoor composter, and make good use of all the trimmings from the garden and kitchen. I have both. My husband built me a fencing ring outside, where I throw the big stuff, and I put all of our kitchen scraps in the indoor electric composter in the garage. 🌱

Melodie Metje is an engineer and gardener living in Ohio. She shares her experiences, tips, and more on her blog Victory Garden on the Golf Course (www.VictoryGardenOnTheGolfCourse.com).



Soaker hose irrigation systems make watering plants simple.



Great Grilled RECIPES

These delicious dishes will satisfy every member of the family.

By the Grilling Experts at Char-Broil

IF there's one thing most people agree on, it's a love of firing up the grill. After all, outdoor cooking methods, such as grilling and barbecuing, are easy ways to prepare great-tasting meals. Cookouts are a summer tradition, and a fun way to spend time outdoors with the family. Here are some delicious recipes to try at your next cookout.

And for some tasty side dish and dessert ideas, turn to "In the Kitchen" on Page 45. 🍴

SEE RECIPES ON PAGES 29-30

This is excerpted with permission from *Char-Broil Grilling for the Family* (Fox Chapel Publishing).

The Cheddar Burger

Yields 4 servings.

- 1 pound ground beef
- 3 tablespoons steak sauce (plus 2 tablespoons, optional), divided
- 4 slices cheddar cheese
- 1 medium onion, peeled and cut into strips, optional
- 1 medium green or red bell pepper, seeded and cut into strips, optional
- 1 tablespoon butter, optional

- 4 hamburger buns, split
- 4 slices tomato, optional

- 1 Preheat grill to medium-high heat.
- 2 In a medium-sized bowl, combine ground beef and 3 tablespoons steak sauce. Mix lightly but thoroughly.
- 3 Divide mixture into 4 equal portions. Shape each portion into a patty, enclosing a slice of cheese inside. Set aside.

4 If using onion and bell pepper strips, place a skillet on a hot grill grate, and melt butter. Add onions and pepper strips, and cook until tender. Stir in remaining steak sauce, and keep mixture warm.

5 Add burgers to grill, and cook for 8 to 10 minutes, or until desired doneness is reached, turning only once.

6 Place burgers on buns, and top with onions, peppers, and tomato slices, if desired.

Rosemary & Garlic Grilled Shrimp

Yields 3 to 4 servings.

- 1 pound raw shrimp, peeled, tails on
- 1 clove garlic, minced or chopped
- 1 teaspoon crushed dried rosemary, or 2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh rosemary
- 1 teaspoon dried basil, or 2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh basil
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon kosher or sea salt
- 1 to 2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil

- 1 In a large bowl, toss shrimp with garlic, rosemary, basil, and black pepper. Cover and refrigerate for 1 hour.
- 2 Preheat grill to medium heat.
- 3 Just before grilling, add salt and oil to shrimp mixture, and toss to coat.
- 4 Place shrimp on grill, and cook for about 3 minutes per side, turning only once.



Hickory Beef Ribs

Yields 4 servings.

- 1 cup soy sauce, divided
- 1 tablespoon steak spice
- 1 tablespoon garlic salt
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh garlic
- 1 teaspoon chili flakes
- 2 racks beef ribs (8 to 10 ribs each)
- 1 large onion, diced
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 3 cans (28 ounces each) tomato sauce
- 1 jar (19 ounces) applesauce
- 2 cups brown sugar
- 1 cup honey
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup white vinegar
- 4 tablespoons molasses
- $1\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoons liquid smoke
- Salt and pepper, to taste

- 1 Fill a large stockpot with water. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup soy sauce, steak spice, garlic salt, chopped garlic, and chili flakes. Bring to a boil. Add ribs, and boil for 1 hour.
- 2 In a large saucepan, sauté onion in oil until soft. Add tomato sauce, applesauce, brown sugar, honey, vinegar, molasses, remaining soy sauce, liquid smoke, salt, and pepper. Stir well, and bring mixture to a boil. Reduce heat to medium, and simmer for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- 3 Remove ribs from water mixture. Discard water mixture, and pat ribs dry with paper towels.
- 4 Coat ribs with sauce mixture to cover. Let stand for 30 minutes.
- 5 Preheat grill to medium-high heat.



6 Place ribs on grill, and cook for 8 to 10 minutes, basting with sauce mixture and turning often to avoid burning.



Salmon Skewers

Yields 12 servings.

1 skinless salmon fillet (1 pound)
12 wooden skewers, soaked
in water
¼ cup soy sauce
¼ cup honey
1 tablespoon rice vinegar
1 teaspoon minced fresh
ginger root
1 clove garlic, minced
Pinch of black pepper
12 lemon wedges

- ① Lightly oil grill grate, and pre-heat grill to medium-high heat.
- ② Slice salmon fillet lengthwise into 12 long strips. Thread each

strip onto a skewer, and place skewers in a shallow baking dish.

③ In a medium-sized bowl, whisk together soy sauce, honey, vinegar, ginger root, garlic, and pepper. Pour three-quarters of the mixture over skewers in dish, and let marinate at room temperature for 30 minutes.

④ Pour remaining marinade mixture into a small pan. Place on grill, and bring to a simmer.

⑤ Thread a lemon wedge onto the end of each skewer. Place skewers on grill, and cook for about 4 minutes per side, or until salmon flakes easily with a fork, turning once and brushing often with simmering marinade mixture.

BBQ Orange Chicken

Yields 4 to 5 servings.

¼ cup vegetable oil
¼ cup frozen orange juice
concentrate
½ cup white wine vinegar
¼ cup tomato paste
Zest from 1 orange
2½ pounds chicken pieces

- ① Preheat grill to high heat.
- ② In a medium-sized bowl, mix

oil, orange juice concentrate, vinegar, tomato paste, and orange zest until smooth.

③ Reduce grill temperature to medium heat on one side, and turn off heat on other side. Place chicken pieces on grill, skin side down, away from heat, and cook for 15 minutes. Turn, and grill for another 10 minutes.

④ Brush chicken pieces with sauce, and cook for an additional 10 minutes, turning occasionally.



Grilled Angel Food Cake S'mores

Yields 8 servings.

8 slices (½ inch thick each) angel
food cake
4 chocolate bars (1 ounce each),
35 percent or more cocoa
8 large marshmallows
Salt, to taste

- ① Preheat grill to medium heat.
- ② Make 4 s'more sandwiches, each consisting of 1 slice of cake, 1 chocolate bar, 2 marshmallows, a pinch of salt, and another slice of cake.

③ Wrap each sandwich in aluminum foil, and place on grill, either on upper rack or over indirect heat.

④ Cook for 5 minutes. Check to see if chocolate and marshmallows are melting. If not, cook a few minutes longer.

⑤ Remove sandwiches from foil, place diagonally against grill grates, and grill quickly until grill marks form. Turn sandwiches 90 degrees, and continue grilling until more grill marks form, creating diamond shapes.

⑥ Slice sandwiches in half before serving.





Decorative Pots & Planters

Add inexpensive décor to your landscape
using fabric and wooden chairs.

Article and photos
by Debbie Wolfe

SEE PROJECTS ON PAGES 32-35

HOW would you like to create a stunning landscape without breaking the bank? Here are a couple of easy, fun, and inexpensive do-it-yourself projects guaranteed to add beauty to your yard and garden. 🌱

Debbie Wolfe is writer, crafter, home chef, and gardener. This article is excerpted with permission from her book, *Do-It-Yourself Garden Projects and Crafts* (Skyhorse Publishing).



Fabric-Covered Terra Cotta Pots

Dress up plain terra cotta pots by covering them with fabric, using a specially formulated decoupage glue for the outdoors, in which the glue will seal it and make it weatherproof. This project is perfect for using up fabric scraps, and the pots make great gifts for anyone who loves plants.

Tools & Materials

- Masking tape
- Tissue paper
- Terra cotta pot
- Pencil
- Scissors
- Fabric
- Paintbrush
- Mod Podge Outdoor decoupage glue

Instructions

- 1 Tape one end of the tissue paper to a clean terra cotta pot.
- 2 Wrap the tissue paper all the way around the pot until it meets on the other side, and then tape it down to secure it.
- 3 Trace around the rim of the pot with a pencil.
- 4 Trace around the bottom of the pot.
- 5 Carefully remove the tape and tissue paper from the pot. Cut out the template you just traced from the tissue paper.
- 6 Wrap the template around the pot to check the fit. Trim if needed.
- 7 Lay the template on top of the fabric, trace it, and then cut it out.
- 8 Apply a generous layer of decoupage glue to one section of the pot.

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9 Place the center of the fabric over the glue, and position it so it lines up with the bottom lip of the rim. Then, smooth it down onto the surface of the pot, to the bottom edge.

10 Apply decoupage glue to the next section of the pot, position the next section of fabric onto the glue, and smooth it down. Repeat all the way around the pot.

11 Apply a generous layer of decoupage glue all over the top of the fabric to seal it and make it weatherproof. Set aside to dry and cure for 24 hours.

12 Add soil and a plant to the pot, and place it where you want it.



Upcycled Chair Planter

I spotted a chair at a garage sale. It was in good condition, but it needed a new coat of paint. I bought it, with no intention of using it as a chair for sitting, but rather as a new planter for my garden.

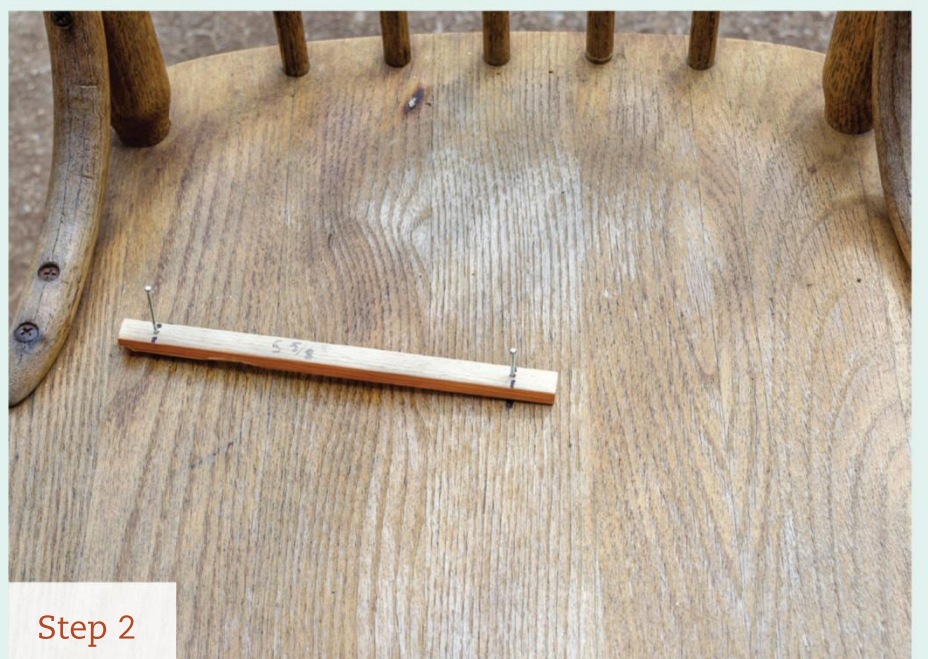
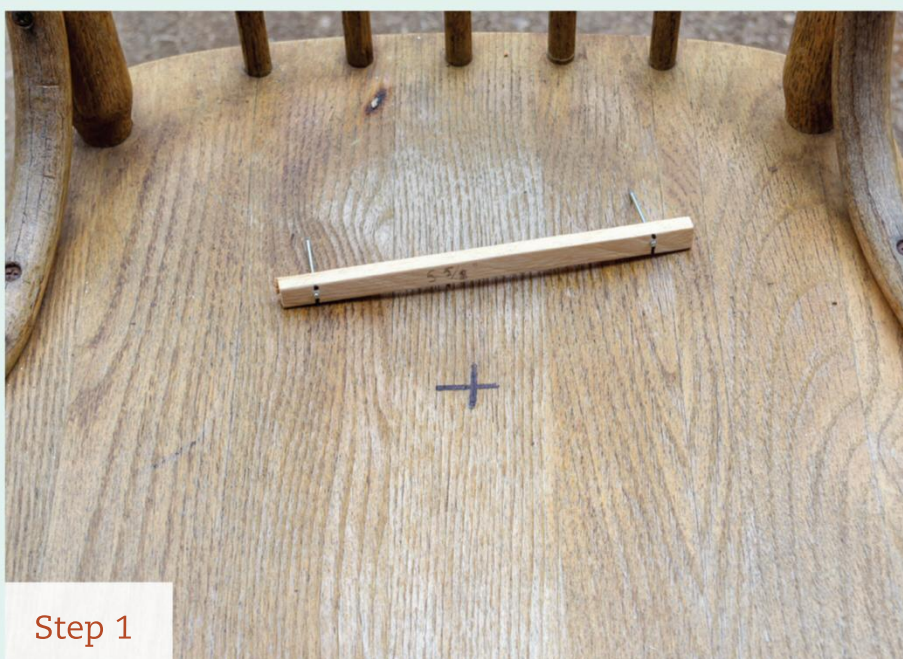
Tools & Materials

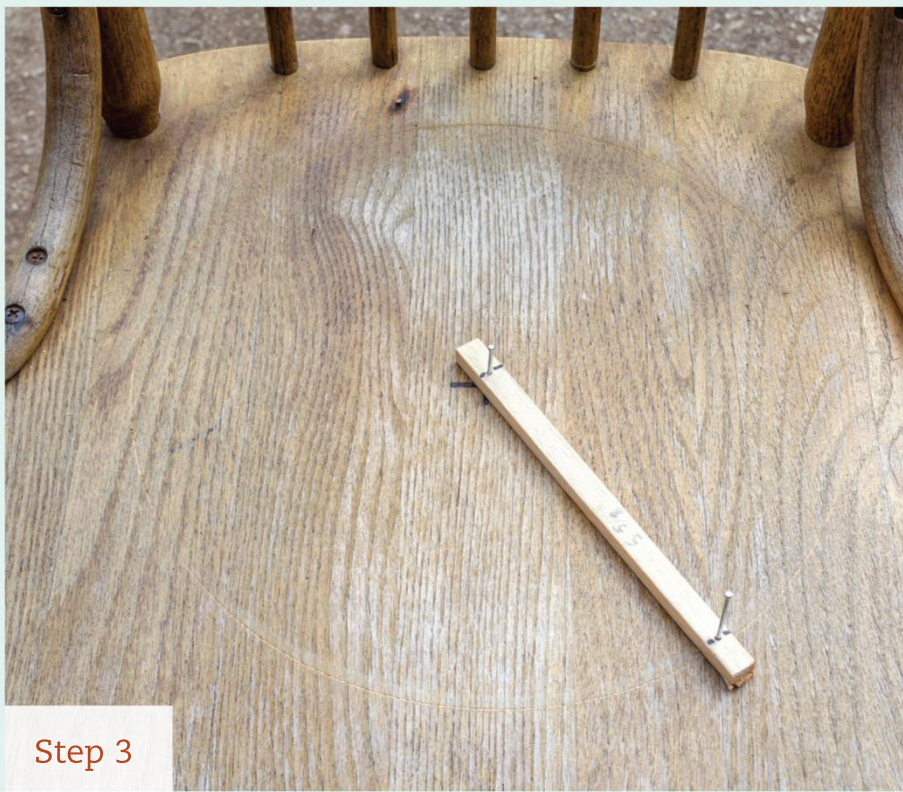
- Measuring tape
- Handsaw
- Hammer
- Drill
- Jigsaw

- Pot
- Scrap piece of wood
- Finishing nails
- Wooden chair
- Marker
- Sandpaper
- Paint
- Shellac or polyurethane finish

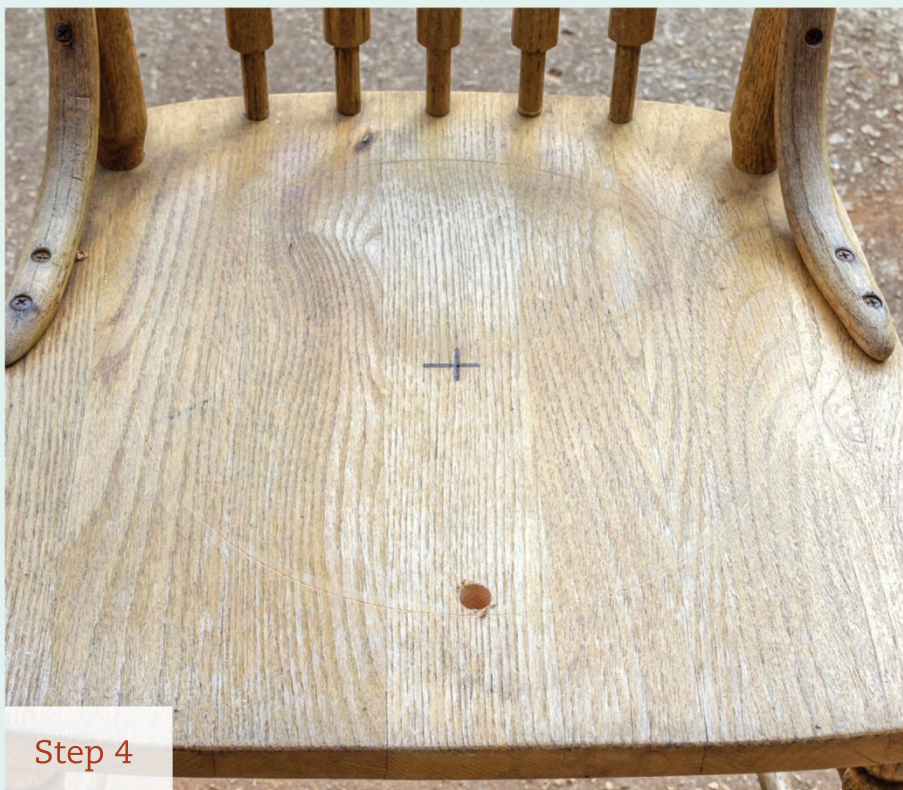
Instructions

1 Measure the diameter of the pot you're using. Cut a piece of scrap wood to measure half the diameter. Nail





Step 3



Step 4

a finishing nail at each end of the scrap wood. Find the center of the chair's seat, and mark it.

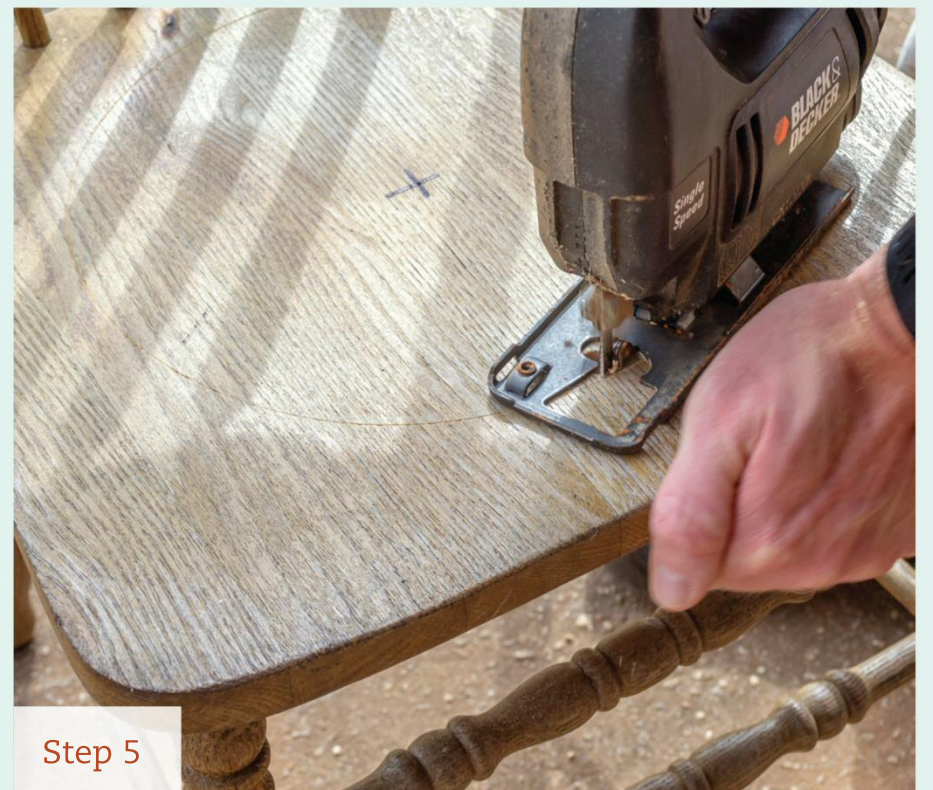
② Nail one end of the scrap wood into the center of the chair on the marked spot.

③ Pivot the scrap wood around in a circle, allowing the nail to score the wood.

④ On the inner edge of the circle, drill a hole large enough to fit the jigsaw blade.

⑤ Insert the jigsaw blade into the hole, and cut out the circle in the chair's seat. Sand the edges, and then paint the chair and let it dry completely. Add a coat of shellac or polyurethane, and allow it to dry overnight.

⑥ Put the chair planter where you want it, and then place the pot, which has been planted with your choice of flowers, into the opening.



Step 5



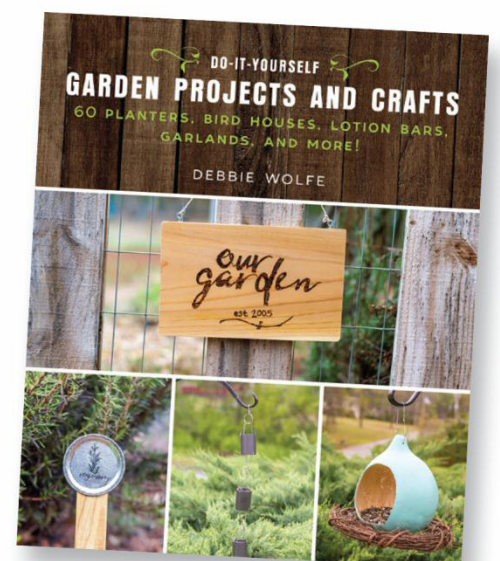
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This title is available at Store.CappersFarmer.com or by calling 800-678-4883. Mention promo code MCFPAKZ5. Item #9900.



Place your repurposed chair planter in your choice of locations. It's especially attractive in front of a wooden fence.

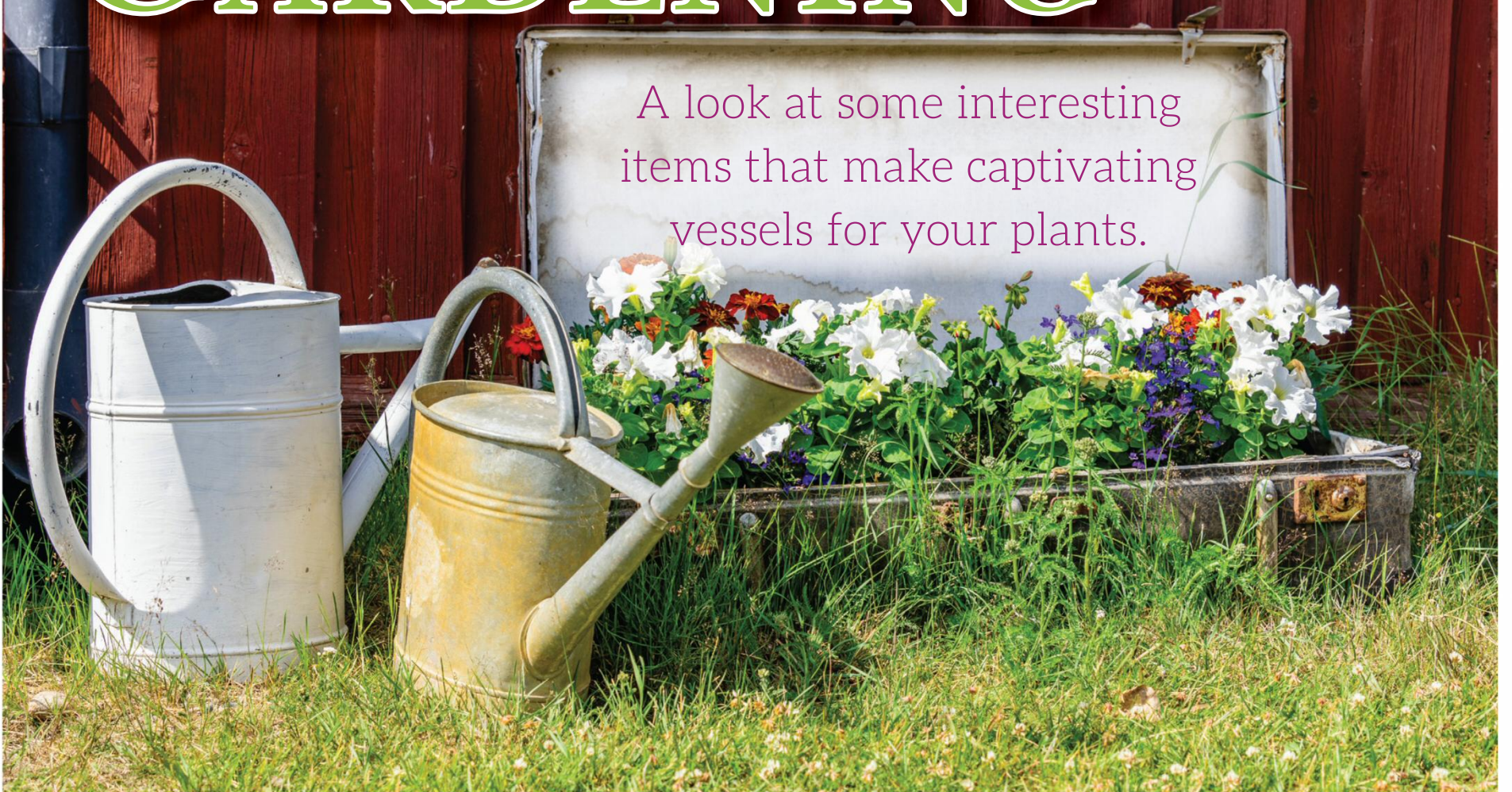




Creative Containers

FOR GARDENING

A look at some interesting items that make captivating vessels for your plants.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JERRY PAVIA (2); GETTY IMAGES/ BINNERSTAM



By Jerry Pavia

VISUAL excitement and practicality make container gardening a terrific choice. Unique containers, whether in a suburban backyard or a rambling plot on a homestead or farm, can add a captivating and sometimes humorous touch.

Inspiration is only a stroll away. Take a walk around your place with an eye fresh bent on discovery. Look in the toolshed to see what's lurking, and don't forget the back of the garage, where most of us store things that don't appear to have much use anymore. Attics can also be a rich source for unique planters.

Almost anything can be used as a container these days, including old tires, worn-out boots, chimney flues, broken dresser drawers, rusted bicycles with flat tires, and even no-longer-needed birdcages. Just make sure that whatever you plan to use isn't made of or treated with anything toxic.

Opening up to new possibilities is what makes gardening fun. Engage in treasure searches at flea markets and garage sales with this focus in mind, and you'll no doubt find items to purchase. The real excitement begins when you rush home to decide on a type of planting and location for your new old item. Don't pass on that old wringer washing machine, popcorn maker, well-used wooden toolbox, non-working coffee maker, or large pieces of broken crockery.

Wheelbarrows that have outlived their carrying lives make charming containers. You can plant them with everything from vegetables to succulents. Try creating





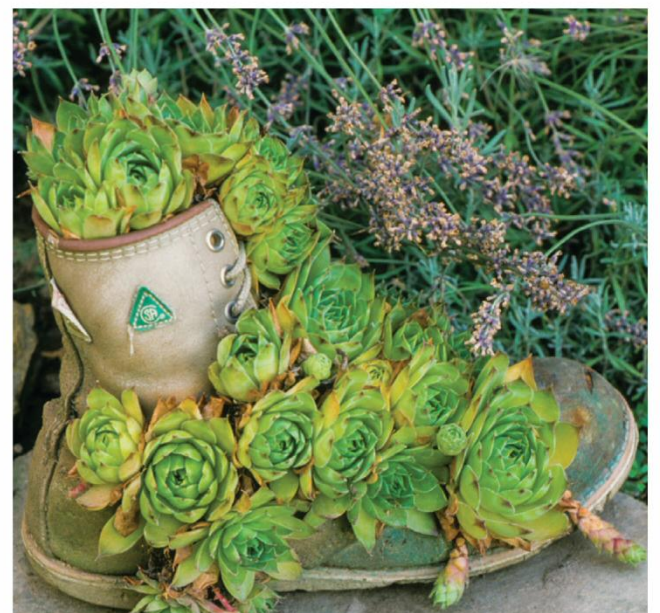
a scene with a life-sized straw "person" pushing your wheelbarrow to a new location in the garden area or yard. You'll be amazed at how much interest it'll add to your landscape.

Container gardening lends itself particularly well to small spaces, such as decks, staircases, landings, and borders. It's easy to achieve height and depth by placing containers on staggered blocks. An easy way to dial in the exact colors you want, for coordination or contrast, is to break out a paintbrush and add new life to a long-neglected object.

There are many practical considerations that make container gardening an ideal choice for the busy, conservation-minded gardener. This gardening style requires far less soil than beds, and containers are tidy and easy to manage. When cold weather hits, containers can easily be transported indoors or to a shed or greenhouse, thus expanding the range of plants you can play with. Weed control is a breeze, and far less water is needed to maintain contained plantings than those in-ground.

In the end, gardening should be a pleasure. Bringing unique containers into your landscape can add delight, bringing a smile to your face every time you stroll through your one-of-a-kind creation. 🌿

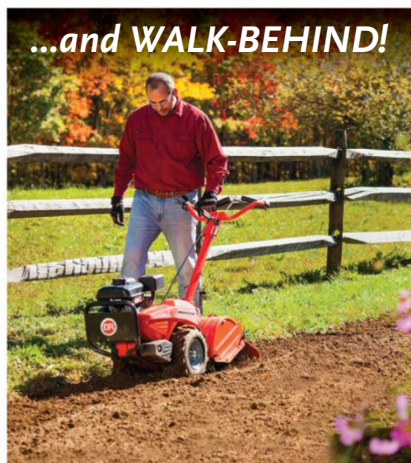
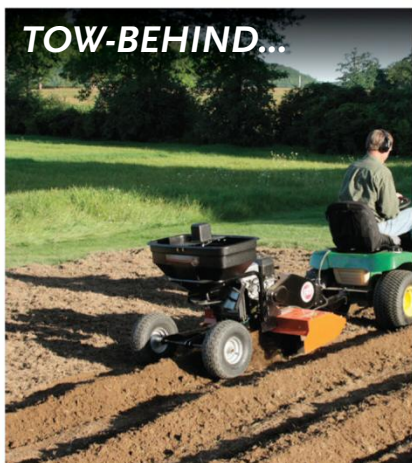
Jerry Pavia lives in Idaho, and has a passion for photography. He contributes regularly to our sister publication, *Grit*.





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Article by Clell G. Ballard
Photos courtesy Clell G. Ballard

EVER since people ceased being nomadic and began living permanently in one place, they've kept animals that helped supply their needs. Those that produced milk, such as goats and cattle, were highly prized. In areas with mild winters, they were easy to keep, because their food supply was native grass. However, in order to feed animals in areas with harsher winters, it was necessary to harvest and store hay. For centuries, that meant cutting a grass crop with a scythe and transporting it to a central location. The most basic tool for feeding cattle and cleaning up after them was the pitchfork.

A Welcome Development

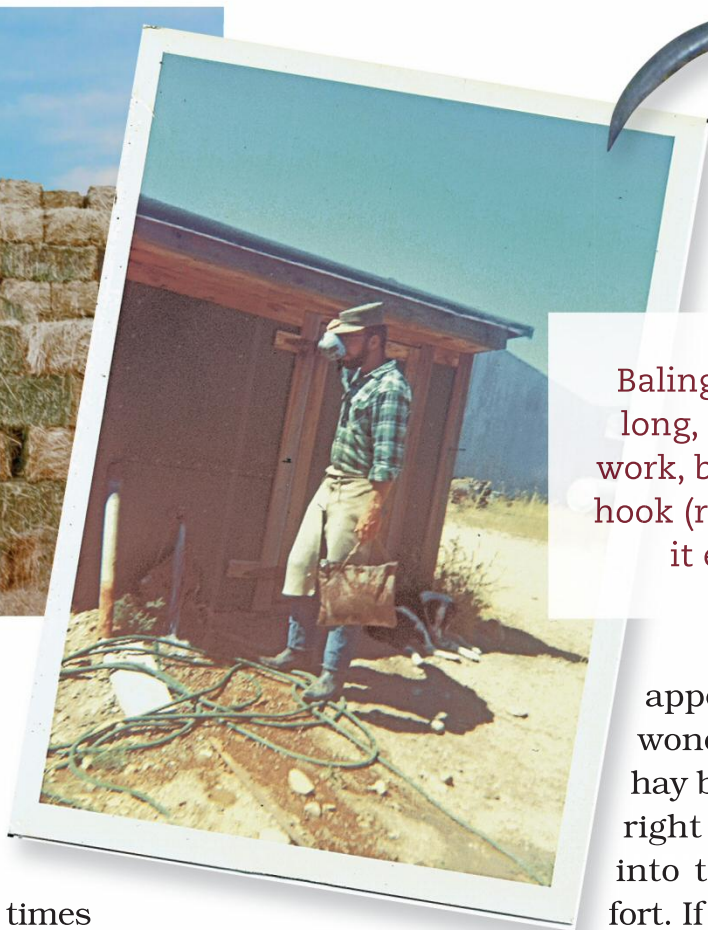
When farm machinery came along, new methods of handling hay were developed. Baling became the standard by the mid-20th century. First, hay was brought to stationary balers. Eventually, almost everyone used balers pulled by tractors that picked up hay in the field. Self-propelled balers never really caught on. Pitchforks didn't disappear, but they were no longer needed to use in hand-piling loose hay into large stacks.

The common baler cut hay into small sections, and compressed those into a rectangular cube that was bound with twine. For several decades, bales were typically secured by two strong strings made of sisal.

Pitching loose hay all day long was hard work. The generation that did that is mostly gone now, but I've been told stories of weeks of hard physical labor spent stacking hay. When people today look back on that activity, they rarely understand the difficulty of standing on unstable loose hay hour after hour, lifting and distributing forks of hay as they built a stack. When baling came along, farmers welcomed the development.

'Slipping' Bales

Farmers in our isolated area were slow to begin baling their hay, but my uncle had his custom-baled for the first time in 1958. As a teenager, I went out that summer to help him stack bales. We picked up the 70-pound alfalfa hay bales by the two strings. Even though we wore gloves, our fingers were red and raw after a couple of days of that. Sore hands weren't an excuse to miss work, so a lot of agony accompanied my introduction to bale stacking. Fortunately, his crop was fairly small, so I survived—although there were times I wondered if I would.



Baling hay was long, hard, hot work, but the hay hook (right) made it easier.

appearance, those hooks were wonderful for lifting two-string hay bales. They were formed just right so you could insert them into the hay with almost no effort. If a bale was decent, the hook never pulled out.

Although it may be hard for some to believe, I always stacked hay barehanded. My cousin wore gloves, but I found I could lift, handle, carry, and place bales more easily by just holding that wooden handle in my bare hands. There was never any need for a skilled stacker to touch the hay itself.

Mind-Numbing Numbers

The photos accompanying this article show us working in 1965, when we built a stack of 8,000 bales. That means my cousin picked up 16,000 and I picked up 24,000—remember, each of the 8,000 was handled five times. We had already done stacking for several years and didn't know it at the time, but for the next six summers, we at least matched that number and sometimes exceeded it.

By 1969, and for a few years thereafter, a slightly easier method was developed, but it only reduced the number of bales lifted by one-third. Finally, machine stackers came online, and our career of "bucking bales" ended. We were glad it was over.

If someone today were to run across a pair of hay hooks like those we used back in the 1960s and '70s, it's likely they'd hardly notice them, seeing them only as simple artifacts of earlier farming efforts. But believe me when I say that wooden-handle hay hooks were, and still are, wonderful agricultural inventions, because with them, in slightly more than a decade, I was able to "buck" more than a quarter of a million hay bales barehanded. 🌾

When California dairies relocated to southern Idaho, the demand for high-protein hay from our high elevation, dryland valley increased dramatically. By the next summer, my uncle had his own hay baler to put up a crop several times larger than before. When the bales came out of the baler, we "slipped" them. A platform made of heavy planks was pulled along the ground behind the baler, where I stood and stacked the bales. When a pile of about 10 was made, a bar was jabbed into the ground between the planks, forcing the bales to slide off onto the ground. Then the process was repeated. When the baling was complete, numerous small piles of bales had been scattered across the field.

My cousin and I were hired to haul in bales and make one large stack. For the next decade, a good part of my summers consisted of stacking hay bales by hand. Pitching hay was hard work, but in some ways, stacking heavy bales was even harder. Our 11-hour workdays consisted of five hours in the morning, from 7 until noon, followed by six hours in the afternoon and evening, working in the heat of the day, until quitting time at 7 p.m.

Hook Eased the Handling

Every bale was picked up five times between the time it was created to the time it rested neatly in a stack. First, the bale was carried from the baler to the slip pile, where it was picked up and placed on a hay loader that carried it up to the truck. A man stationed on the truck placed bales for transport to the stack. At the stack, each bale was lifted from the truck and either tossed down or placed on a loader so it could be carried up. Finally, the bale was carried and carefully placed on the stack in a way that ensured stability. With all that handling, using the strings became a problem. Since I slipped the bales, I picked up each one three times, and my cousin picked them up twice.

Our personal bale-handling equipment consisted of special leather hay aprons and hay hooks. Many kinds of hooks were developed over the years, but we used models with round wooden handles. Although simple in

Clell G. Ballard is a retired high school teacher. He's worked on farms since he was in grade school, including 53 summers spent working on his uncle's dryland hay and grain ranch.



Do-It-Yourself HAND TOWELS

Replace traditional paper towels with these easy-to-make alternatives.

Article and photos by Renée Benoit

Ilove coming up with ways to reduce, recycle, and reuse. These towels do just that, and they're extremely simple to make. These towels make great housewarming and bridal shower gifts, so make plenty, so you can keep some and give some as gifts

You can use a linen blend fabric, if desired, but I wanted the super-absorbent quality that 100 percent linen has. You can also use cotton or terry cloth, as long

as it's 100 percent natural fiber. Most yard goods are polyester blends and aren't very absorbent. Although linen is more expensive, it's well worth it, especially when you divide the cost between four towels. 🌿

Renée Benoit is a lifelong do-it-yourselfer, artist, and gardener. She lives in the central valley of California, where she maintains a large vegetable garden and has a variety of DIY projects in the works.

STEP 1: Preshrink your fabric by washing it in warm or hot water, and then drying it in a dryer on the medium or hot setting. Iron as many wrinkles out of the fabric as you can, and then cut the fabric into four equal pieces, the size of a traditional hand towel. Save any remaining fabric for another use.

STEP 2: You'll make a ½-inch doubled hem all around. The raw edge, which would fray if left alone, will be tucked in and sewn over.

If you're experienced, you can fold, iron, miter the corners, and sew without guides. If you haven't done much sewing, then I suggest marking your fabric with a chalk pencil at the fold and cut lines.

The first step in sewing the hem is to create the first mitered corner, which is a fancy way of tucking in the raw edges at the corners. (See Mitering Illustrations on Page 44.)

You'll need to cut off the very corner of the fabric to reduce bulk when you fold and sew the hems. Cut a diagonal that runs through the little "box" the two pairs of fold lines for the hem make at the corner.

STEP 3: Fold the diagonal cut edge toward the center of the towel along a diagonal line that crosses the innermost intersection of the hem guidelines (A). Then, fold up the two straight edges of the towel on the first fold line (B) and then the second (C), and pin in place. Pin basting will keep everything tidy, and you can stitch right over the pins if you insert them perpendicular to your stitching line.

STEP 4: Work your way around the towel, until you've mitered all four corners, and all the straight edges are double folded. Iron to make the folds crisp.

STEP 5: Sew a line of topstitching close to the inner edge of the hem, all the way around the towel. You can sew as many rows of topstitching as you desire. At each corner, stop with the needle in the fabric, lift the sewing machine foot, turn the towel so you can continue stitching straight down the next side, lower the foot, and continue. This is called "pivoting," and it makes very neat stitching lines. Be sure to backstitch at the beginning and end to secure your thread. Once you're finished topstitching, press your hand towels.

NOTE: Sometimes fabric doesn't have a right side or a wrong side, so you can fold the hem either direction, as long as you're consistent on each towel. If your fabric does have a right and wrong side, you'll be folding the hem toward the wrong side.

Tools & Materials

- Iron and ironing board
- Scissors
- Sewing machine
- 100 percent linen or linen-cotton blend fabric (1 yard)
- Chalk pencil
- 100 percent cotton thread to match fabric



Step 2



Step 3A

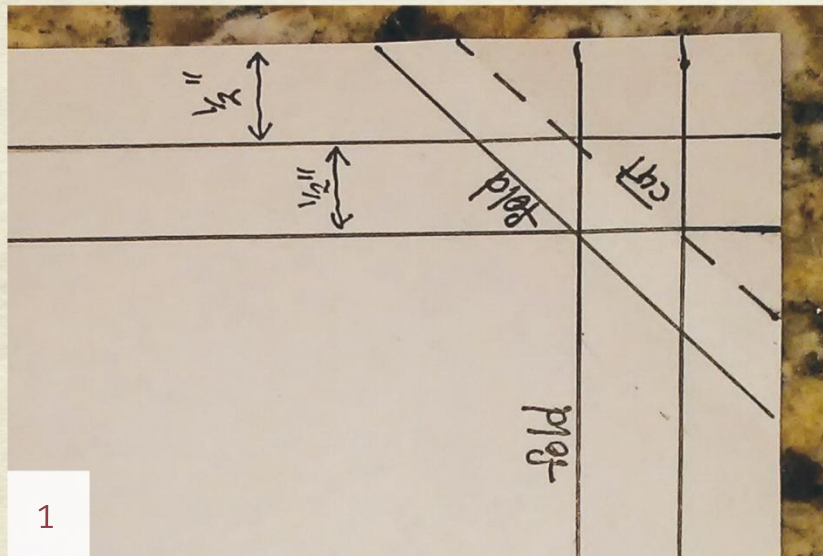


Step 3B

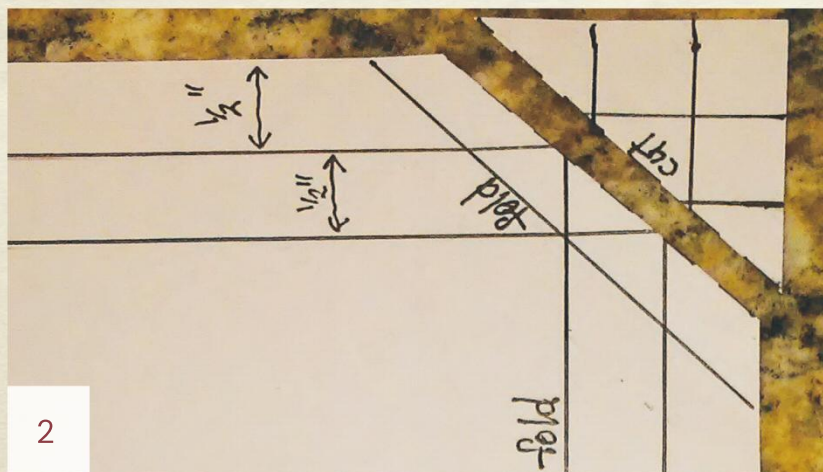


Step 3C

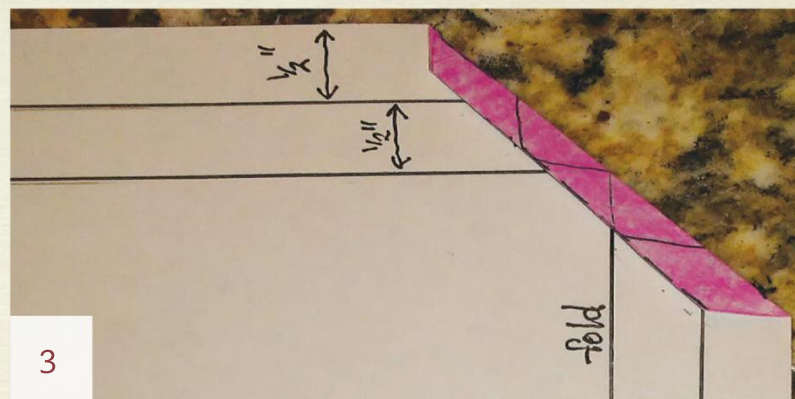
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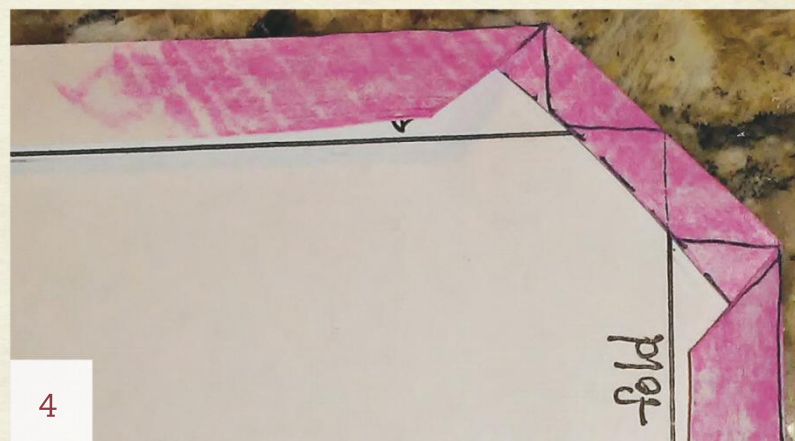
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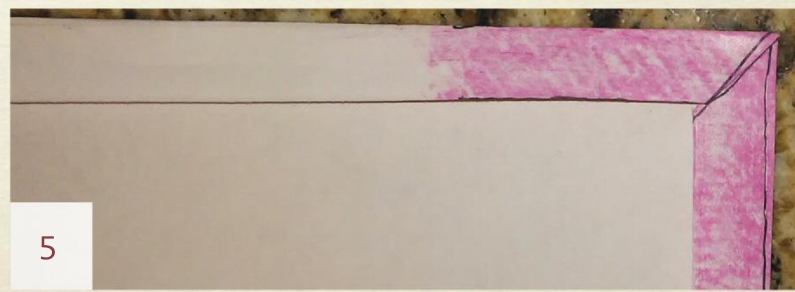
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Jim Long

In the Kitchen

Cookout Sides & Desserts

A collection of recipes from
the *Capper's Farmer* archives.



Picnic Coleslaw

Yields about 10 servings.

½ medium head green cabbage, finely shredded
½ medium head red cabbage, finely shredded
3 medium carrots, peeled and shredded
½ cup loosely packed, coarsely chopped fresh
parsley leaves
1 cup mayonnaise
2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar, or to taste
2 tablespoons Dijon-style mustard
1 teaspoon celery seeds
1 to 2 teaspoons sugar, optional
Salt and pepper, to taste

❶ In an extra-large bowl, toss cabbage with carrots and parsley leaves. Set aside.

❷ In a medium-sized bowl, blend mayonnaise, vinegar, mustard, celery seeds, and sugar, if desired. Season with salt and pepper. Taste, and adjust sugar, salt, and pepper if needed.

❸ Stir enough dressing into cabbage mixture to coat thoroughly. (You won't need all the dressing.)

❹ Chill for 1 hour before serving.

Smoker Baked Beans

Yields about 12 servings.

6 slices thick-cut peppered bacon, diced
1 medium onion, diced
1 green bell pepper, diced
2 cans (28 ounces each) pork and beans
¾ cup barbecue sauce
½ cup firmly packed dark brown sugar
¼ cup apple cider vinegar
2 tablespoons Dijon-style mustard
2 tablespoons molasses, honey, or maple syrup
Salt and pepper, to taste

❶ Preheat smoker to 250 F using a mild or fruit wood of your choice.

❷ In a skillet, cook bacon for 2 to 3 minutes, or just long enough to render the fat. Remove bacon.

❸ Add onion and bell pepper to skillet, and cook in bacon fat until soft, about 3 minutes. Transfer to a 9-by-13-inch aluminum foil pan.

❹ Add remaining ingredients to pan, and stir well to combine.

❺ Smoke, uncovered, for 3 hours.

Carbonara Rotini & Cheese

Yields about 6 servings.

8 ounces rotini pasta
5 tablespoons butter
4 tablespoons flour
2 cups milk
Salt and pepper, to taste
1 heaping cup shredded cheddar cheese
¼ cup grated Parmesan
2 large eggs, lightly beaten
8 slices bacon, cooked and crumbled, divided
⅔ cup frozen peas, thawed

① Preheat oven to 375 F. Lightly coat a 9-by-13-inch baking dish with nonstick cooking spray; set aside.

② Cook pasta to al dente, according to package directions. Drain, and place in a large bowl.

③ Melt butter in a saucepan over medium heat. Sprinkle in flour, and whisk for 2 to 3 minutes. Slowly add milk, whisking constantly, until mixture is smooth and thick enough to coat the back of a spoon. Season with salt and pepper.

④ Remove saucepan from heat, and stir in cheddar and Parmesan cheeses, a little at a time, until a smooth sauce forms.



⑤ Pour sauce over rotini, and stir gently to combine. Set aside to cool for about 10 minutes.

⑥ Add eggs, bacon, and peas, and mix well.

⑦ Transfer mixture to prepared baking dish, and bake, uncovered, for 20 to 25 minutes.

⑧ Cool slightly before serving.

Bacon & Broccoli Salad

Yields about 10 servings.

8 cups broccoli florets (about 1 pound)
½ red onion, sliced thin and coarsely chopped
3 tablespoons canola oil
3 tablespoons rice vinegar
2 tablespoons sugar
Salt and pepper, to taste
½ cup shredded cheddar cheese
4 strips bacon, cooked and crumbled

① In a large bowl, stir together broccoli and onion. Set aside.

② In a small bowl, whisk together oil, vinegar, and sugar. Season with salt and pepper.

③ Drizzle oil mixture over broccoli and onion, and toss to coat.

④ Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.

⑤ Just before serving, add cheese and bacon, and toss to combine.

NOTE: If you want to add a little more sweet and salty flavor to this salad, add ½ cup of dried cranberries to the broccoli and onion, and then stir in ¼ cup of sunflower kernels before serving.



Roasted Corn & Black Bean Salad

Yields about 8 servings.

4 ears of corn, shucked
1 red onion, chopped
¼ cup loosely packed chopped fresh cilantro
2 cans (15 ounces each) black beans, drained and rinsed
3 tomatoes, chopped (about 1 pound)
3 tablespoons red wine vinegar
2 teaspoons Dijon-style mustard
Salt and pepper, to taste
⅓ cup olive oil, divided

- 1 Preheat grill to high, and heat for 10 minutes.
- 2 Add corn to grill, and cook for about 10 minutes, turning often. (You want the kernels charred, but not burned.)
- 3 Remove corn from grill, and set aside until cool enough to handle. Then, cut kernels from cobs, place in a large bowl, and let cool completely.
- 4 Add onion, cilantro, beans, and tomatoes to cooled corn, and mix well.
- 5 In a small bowl, whisk together vinegar, mustard, salt, and pepper. Slowly whisk in oil until thoroughly blended and thickened.
- 6 Pour oil mixture over salad mixture, and toss to combine. Taste, and add more salt and pepper, if needed.
- 7 Cover and chill for 30 minutes before serving.



Stuffed Baked Potatoes

Yields 8 servings.



8 large russet potatoes
½ cup unsalted butter, room temperature
½ cup sour cream
½ cup chopped fresh chives
4 green onions, thinly sliced, white and green parts separated
1½ cups shredded cheddar cheese, divided
Salt and pepper, to taste

- 1 Preheat oven to 400 F.
- 2 Prick potatoes all over with a fork or sharp knife. Wrap in foil, and bake for about 1 hour, or until tender.
- 3 Remove potatoes from foil, and cut a lengthwise slit in the top of each. Carefully scoop out flesh from potatoes into a large bowl.
- 4 Place potato shells on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper, and set aside.
- 5 Stir butter, sour cream, chives, green onion whites, and half the cheese into potato flesh, and stir to combine. Season with salt and pepper.
- 6 Spoon filling evenly into potato shells. Sprinkle remaining cheese on top.
- 7 Bake for another 5 minutes, or until cheese is melted.
- 8 Garnish tops with green onion greens, and serve hot.

Fruit Salsa & Cinnamon Chips

Yields 8 servings.

⅓ cup sugar
1 teaspoon cinnamon
Olive oil spray
10 flour tortillas (10-inch diameter)
2 Granny Smith apples, peeled and chopped
2 tablespoons lemon juice
1 cup diced watermelon or kiwi
½ pound strawberries, hulled and chopped
¼ pound raspberries
¼ pound blackberries
¼ pound blueberries
4 tablespoons raspberry preserves

① Preheat oven to 350 F. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper.

② In a small bowl, mix together sugar and cinnamon. Set aside.

③ Lightly coat both sides of 5 flour tortillas with olive oil spray, and sprinkle each side lightly with cinnamon-sugar mixture.

④ Stack tortillas, and cut into quarters with a pizza cutter. (You should have 20 wedges.)

⑤ Place wedges on prepared baking sheet, and bake for 8 to 10 minutes, or until crisp. Remove, and allow to cool.

⑥ Repeat Steps 3 through 5 with the remaining flour tortillas.

⑦ In a large bowl, toss apples with lemon juice. Add watermelon, berries, and preserves, and stir gently to combine.

⑧ Cover and let stand at room temperature for 15 to 20 minutes.

⑨ Serve salsa with cinnamon chips.



Homemade Vanilla Ice Cream

Yields 1¼ quarts.



2 cups heavy whipping cream

2 cups half-and-half

1 cup sugar

1 vanilla bean, split and seeds scraped out,
or 3 teaspoons pure vanilla extract

① Place a 9-by-13-inch baking dish in the freezer for 30 minutes.

② In a large bowl, whisk together whipping cream, half-and-half, and sugar until sugar is completely dissolved.

③ Stir in vanilla bean seeds, and mix thoroughly.

④ Pour ice cream mixture into prepared pan.

⑤ Place pan in freezer for 30 minutes, or until edges of mixture begin to set.

⑥ Using a hand mixer, beat mixture in pan until smooth and creamy.

⑦ Cover pan with a lid or cling wrap, and return to freezer until firm, about 3 hours, beating with mixer every 30 minutes.

NOTE: If preferred, this can also be prepared in an ice cream maker following the manufacturer's instructions. You can also create different flavors with the addition of chocolate syrup or chunks, fruit, or candy pieces.

Old-Fashioned Peach Pie

Yields 8 servings.

Prepared pastry for 9-inch double-crust pie

1 egg, beaten
5 cups peeled, sliced peaches
2 tablespoons lemon juice
½ cup all-purpose flour
1 cup sugar
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
¼ teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons butter

- ❶ Preheat oven to 450 F.
- ❷ Roll out enough pastry dough to form a bottom crust, and line the bottom and sides of a 9-inch pie plate with it. Brush with beaten egg. Set aside.
- ❸ In a large bowl, toss peaches with lemon juice. Set aside.
- ❹ In a small bowl, whisk together flour, sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, and salt. Add to peaches, and mix gently but thoroughly.
- ❺ Pour peach filling into bottom crust, and dot with butter.
- ❻ Roll out remaining pastry dough to form a top crust, and place over filling, folding edges under. Flute edges to seal, and brush with remaining egg. Cut several slits in top crust to vent steam.
- ❼ Bake for 10 minutes. Reduce oven to 350 F, and continue baking for another 30 minutes, or until crust is golden and juice is bubbling through vents.



- ❽ Cool slightly. Serve warm, plain or topped with whipped cream or ice cream.

Luscious Lemon Bars

Yields 36 servings.

1 cup butter, room temperature
2 cups sugar, divided
2¼ cups all-purpose flour, divided
4 eggs
2 lemons, juiced

- ❶ Preheat oven to 350 F.
- ❷ In a medium-sized bowl, blend together butter, ½ cup sugar, and 2 cups flour.
- ❸ Press butter mixture into an ungreased 9-by-13-inch baking dish, and bake for 15 to 20 minutes, or until crust is golden.
- ❹ In a large bowl, whisk together remaining sugar and remaining flour. Add eggs and lemon juice, and whisk until smooth.
- ❺ Pour filling over baked crust, and bake for an



additional 20 minutes, or until fairly set. (The filling will firm up as it cools.)

- ❻ Cool completely, then cut into 2-inch squares.

Magical MEMORIES

Remembering childhood summers spent at
grandparents' Virginia farm.





By Lynn Bowen Walker

MEMORY is a funny thing. We can forget what we did last weekend, but we can remember with sparkling clarity a conversation from 40 years ago. Some events, and some places, just seem to have a grip on us, rooted in our minds forever.

That's what my grandparents' farm in rural Virginia is for me.

We visited it every summer of my childhood, for two or three weeks at a time. It took hours and hours of driving to get there. However, once we drove up the gravel driveway, smelled the green of the boxwood bushes, pulled open the door of the screened-in back porch to be greeted with the smell of Mimi's vegetable soup and homemade rolls, my parents, siblings, and I felt like we'd stepped into another world. It was so different from our Connecticut home in the suburbs.

The Old Farmhouse

Mimi and Papa's farmhouse had been built in the 1920s. When the upgraded road came through a decade later, the house was lifted, put on rollers, and pulled by horses about 50 yards up the hill. The floorboards creaked, the water in the bathtub smelled rusty, and there was a pantry right off the kitchen that was dark and scary. Somehow, though, that old farmhouse was magical.

Upstairs, my sister and I shared the bedroom that had belonged to my mom and her sister, Alice, when they were young. As kids, we couldn't pronounce "Alice," so instead, she became "Li" (pronounced "Lie") to us. Mom and Li's vanity, a low dresser with a large mirror and a hassock perfect for primping, was still in the bedroom.

A floor grate in the corner brought up heat in the winter, but in July it was the ideal contraption for stealthily opening and eavesdropping on the grown-ups below, when we were supposed to be sleeping. A fan in the window hummed through the sweltering summer nights. Sometimes the air felt heavy and had a special smell. That's when you knew rain was coming. Oh, the sound of rain on a tin roof!

Fun & Adventure

Our visits always coincided with haying season, and Papa let us ride on top of the bales that were stacked up on the wagon in pyramids. Perched up on top of the world, swaying at every rut as the old tractor crossed the fields, we felt like royalty—even those of us with hay fever (me), who sneezed through every summer.

Sometimes while my three older siblings were off exploring the farm, I'd stay back at the house with Mom and Mimi. I'd sit on the floor doing mazes and dot-to-dots in my activity books while they talked. Mimi had six brothers and five sisters, and nearly all of them



lived within an hour's drive—most were within about 10 minutes—so there was never a shortage of topics.

Sometimes we'd move to the screened-in back porch, which housed the ripening parade of homegrown tomatoes along the long sill. Mimi would sit in her wicker rocker, shelling butter beans into a metal bowl, and I got to help. When we were done, I'd climb up on her lap and we'd sing, "Oh, where have you been, Billy Boy, Billy Boy? Oh, where have you been, Charming Billy? I have been to seek a wife, she's the joy of my life, but she's a young thing and cannot leave her mother."

My brothers and sister would come back, breathless with adventure. But I knew the real adventure, the true adventure, had been staying back and spending time with Mom and Mimi.

I also loved going with Papa to pick blackberries.

Social Activities

On Sundays, it seemed like we spent all day at church. In between services, there'd be visiting. One of the great-aunts or great-uncles would come by in the afternoon, or we'd go to one of their homes, for iced tea and plenty of food.

Once a week, we'd pile into the back seat of Papa's old 1953 Plymouth for a trip to town, and because he used the car for hauling hay as much as passengers, we'd share the seat with stray tufts of hay and a few dead bees. That trip to buy groceries for the week was as festive as any carnival ride. Papa usually slipped us each a dollar, against Mom's protest. That kind of money at the five-and-dime store could buy you just about anything.

The town had no stoplights, and was just one main street that was a block long. Across from the five-and-dime store was the brick jailhouse, with the grocery store just up the road. The newspaper office was in there somewhere, too, and Papa would lead us like ducklings into the office every year. He'd take off his

hat, and with a twinkle in his eye, he'd announce the "news" that his grandchildren were visiting all the way from Connecticut—and a few years later, from California. It seemed unbelievable that we were "news," but when the paper came out that week, our names would be listed within the pages, with our arrival documented like we were the mayor.

Family Reunion

The high point of the season was the annual family reunion. It was held outdoors at Uncle Ellis's place, just a few minutes away from Mimi and Papa's. Like everyone's house, to get there you drove down a dirt driveway until you reached the wire gate, and then someone would hop out to unlatch it, and then close it behind the car to keep the cattle in.

The main attraction for us kids was the swimming pool—a large, cement-lined, rectangular hole that was filled each year for the occasion with a pipe fed from a spring. It took multiple days to fill, and along with the water invariably came some frogs and maybe a snake or two. But for us, no Olympic-sized pool could've been more beautiful.

On the big day, the place would be crawling with family. Great-aunts would arrive carrying mysterious dishes of food that they'd set on long picnic tables, which eventually looked like they were about to collapse under the bounty. Fried chicken, salty Virginia hams cured in a backyard smokehouse, homemade biscuits and rolls, salads, pickled watermelon rind, sliced tomatoes and cucumbers from the garden, ice-cold slices of ripe watermelon, and pecan pies were just some of the dishes. And of course, the queen of all dishes, reigning above all, coconut cake—triple the height of any ordinary cake, and covered with glossy white frosting and freshly grated coconut pressed onto the top and sides. It was perfection on a plate.

While the kids played in the pool, the adults visited, standing in clusters at first, and then, as the day wore on, giving way to the slanted-back Adirondack chairs. It was the one day of the year when my little family of six had more relatives than we could even identify, with more cousins than any human had a right to. We had kin, and it was glorious!

I guess that sense of family helps explain the magic of those Virginia summers. Here was a place everyone belonged. Strangers came up and embraced you, just because you were related. You didn't have to earn it, you were simply accepted.

Never-Fading Memories

It's been more than 40 years since I've been to one of those reunions—I don't think they're held anymore, since the original 12 siblings have passed away—but when my siblings and I get together, our memories

bubble like it was last week. The farm represents, to all of us, permanence and stability. We may have moved a few times, but Mimi and Papa were always there on the farm. We could count on them. They were fixed and steady, like the sky. And, oh, those rolls! Mimi's yeast rolls (recipe below) were heaven on a plate. 🌿

Lynn Bowen Walker is a DIY enthusiast and author. You can find her book, *Queen of the Castle: 52 Weeks of Encouragement for the Uninspired, Domestically Challenged, or Just Plain Tired Home-maker*, on Amazon.

Mimi's Homemade Yeast Rolls

Yields 2 dozen rolls.

2 packages (0.25 ounce each) dry yeast
1¾ cups warm water
⅓ cup sugar
Scant ½ cup shortening
1 egg
6 cups flour, or more as needed, divided
2 teaspoons salt

① Dissolve yeast in warm water. Add sugar, and dissolve thoroughly. Add shortening, egg, and 3 cups flour. Mix with mixer for 2 minutes on medium speed. Add 1 cup flour, and mix again.

② Dump mixture out onto a floured surface. Add 2 cups flour, and knead until smooth. Add additional flour if needed to form a stiff dough. Add salt.

③ Let dough rise until doubled in size.

④ Punch dough down.

⑤ Pinch off 24 pieces of dough, and shape into round rolls. Place about 1 inch apart on 2 greased baking sheets (Mimi greased them, but I just line them with parchment paper.) With a paper towel, daub tops of rolls with a little additional shortening. Cover with a clean towel, and let rolls rise in a warm place until doubled in size, about 1 hour.

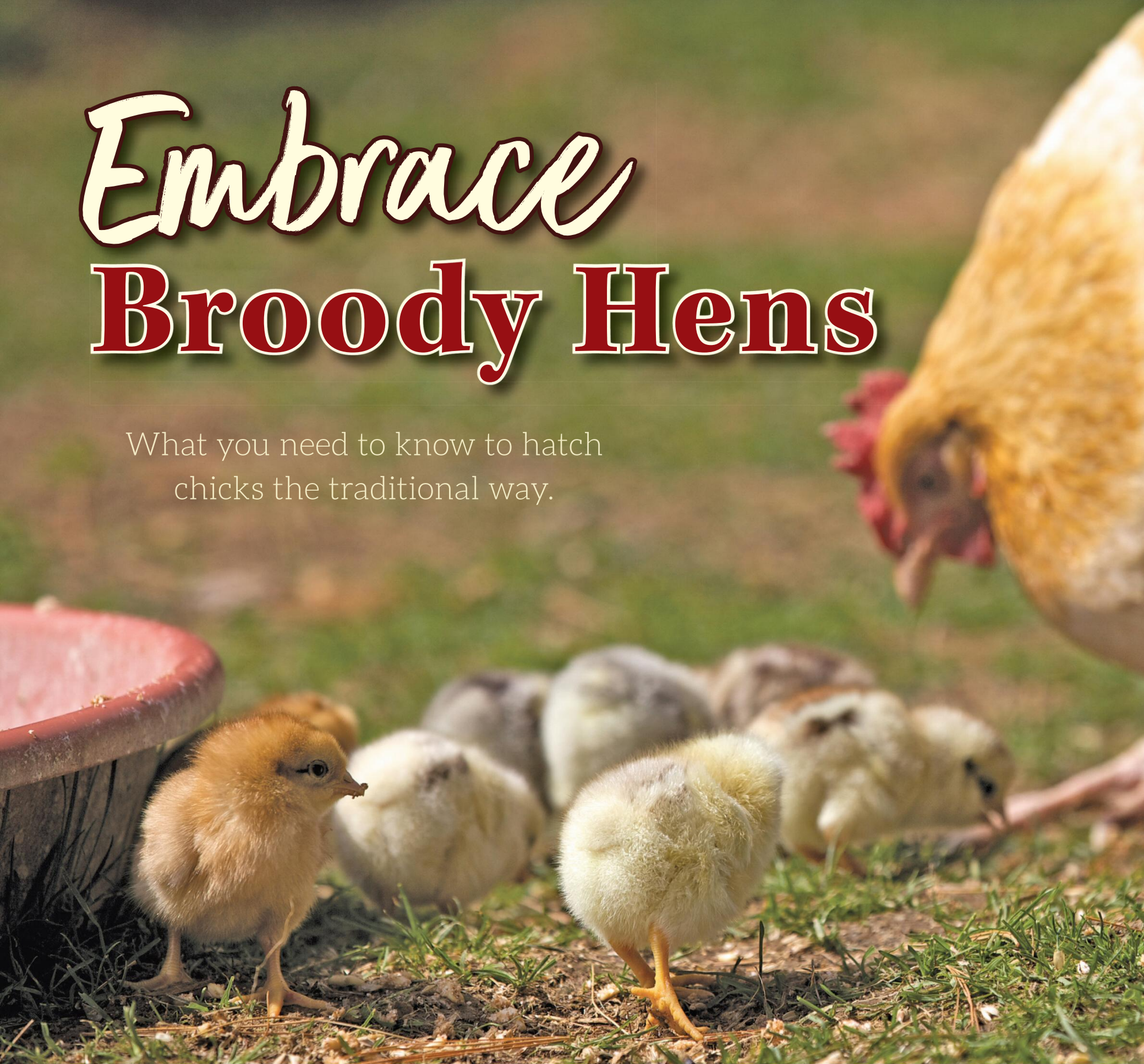
⑥ About 15 minutes before rise is complete, preheat oven to 375 F.

⑦ Bake rolls for 16 to 20 minutes, or until tops are golden. (Halfway through baking, I rotate the baking sheets, and I don't use the lower two rack positions, as I don't want the bottoms to burn.)

NOTE: I usually mix the dough in my bread machine, rather than mixing it by hand.

Embrace Broody Hens

What you need to know to hatch
chicks the traditional way.



By Kristina Seleshanko

MANY chicken keepers get frustrated when a hen persistently sits on her eggs, but I embrace her “broodiness,” because it makes my job much easier. Why spend the time, trouble, and money buying fertilized eggs, babying them in an incubator, and hand-raising chicks when I can let one of my hens do all the work for me?

When I first became interested in getting chicks the old-fashioned way, I was surprised to find that helpful advice could be hard to come by. Perhaps this is because farmers have culled broody hens for centuries. After all, broody hens don’t lay eggs, and that costs

farmers money. Because of this culling practice, modern hens aren’t well wired to hatch eggs.

In general, consider heritage breeds if you’re selecting for broodiness. Heritage breeds have a greater tendency to go broody, because they haven’t had the trait bred out of them to the same degree as modern hybrids. Still, you’re not guaranteed a broody hen from a heritage breed, or a non-setter (a hen that won’t go broody) from a modern breed. And to complicate things further, there’s no way to tell ahead of time if a hen will go broody, so you’ll just have to wait and see.

Thankfully, some breeds are more apt to go broody than others. Breeds that top the list include Brahmas, Cochins, Orpingtons, Silkies, and Sussex. Even so,



not every hen among these breeds will bother to hatch eggs, because many factors influence broodiness, including genetics and environment. And I've learned not to judge a hen too quickly, because some don't go broody until they're at least 2 years old.

Finding Fertilized Eggs

If you live in an area where roosters are allowed, there are a couple of benefits to adding a male to your flock. First, he'll protect your hens from predators, and secondly, he'll fertilize their eggs. Young roosters may provide spotty fertilization, so you might want to wait until your roo is at least a year old before trying to hatch any eggs.

If you don't want, or can't have, a rooster, many homesteaders sell fertilized eggs. Look for local ads on online sites, such as Craigslist or Facebook Marketplace.

Encouraging Broodiness

Some seasons are better than others for successfully hatching eggs. In particular, it's more difficult for chicks to thrive in extreme temperatures, so avoid the hottest weeks of summer and coldest weeks of winter.

To encourage hens to get broody when you want them to, leave eggs in the nesting box overnight, rather than collecting them promptly. Some homesteaders report success using golf balls or fake eggs. You'll know you have a broody hen if she returns to the nest after being shooed away, refuses to leave the nest when you collect eggs, and spends all day sitting on the nest. After a few days, the hen will pluck feathers from her breast, and her body temperature will noticeably rise.

Preparing a Nest & Collecting Eggs

You can allow the hen to create her own nest, but I recommend creating one for her, away from the rest of the flock. Otherwise, when the broody hen gets up for a quick drink or a bite to eat, other hens may lay in her nest. This can lead to broken eggs, or some eggs hatching later than others, which is problematic, because some hens refuse to leave their unhatched eggs to care for their chicks. Create a nest in a separate cage that's predator-proof, provides shelter from the weather, and has enough room for the hen to sit near food and water. A rabbit hutch or small chicken run works well. Make sure there's plenty of bedding.

The easiest option for gathering a clutch of eggs for your broody hen to sit on is to allow eggs to accumulate in your henhouse nesting boxes for a day or two. The broody hen will be naturally attracted and begin sitting on these eggs. The downfall to this method is that any disturbance, such as moving the eggs to a separate nest or cage, may discourage a slightly broody hen from sitting.

A more calculated method is to gather all the eggs before you let the hen start sitting, and then move both the eggs and the hen to a prepared nest. To do so, carefully collect eggs as you normally would, examining each for flaws, such as cracks, holes, and odd shapes or sizes. Gently place the best eggs in an egg-keeping box that's been washed in hot, soapy water. (Previously used cartons may transfer bacteria to the eggs.) Don't wash the eggs, as washing removes their natural bloom, which protects the chicks from bacteria. Set the eggs point-side down, and store in a cool location out of direct sunlight, ideally 55 degrees Fahrenheit with 75 percent humidity. To help prevent embryos from sticking to the eggshells, place a book under one end of the carton, and move the book to the opposite



Eggs normally take about 21 days to hatch after a hen begins sitting.



Most chicks hatch quickly, but some may take a few days.

end of the carton once a day. Don't let the eggs sit too long before beginning the incubation process. Each day an egg goes without incubation it becomes a bit less viable, declining rapidly after seven days.

How many eggs to collect depends largely on your needs and what your hen can comfortably incubate. If you're unsure, collect more eggs than you think you'll need, and remove the excess once the hen is sitting. As a general rule, most hens can sit on up to 12 eggs of the size they naturally lay.

When you've collected the number of eggs you'd like to hatch, transfer them, along with the hen, to the prepared nest. Don't be alarmed if the hen doesn't immediately sit on the eggs. She can take up to a day to begin sitting in earnest, and still have a successful hatch.

Note that red mites and lice can potentially kill sitting hens, so examine your hen carefully before you give her a clutch of eggs. If your flock had red mite problems in the past, it's a good idea to dust the hen with red mite powder before introducing her to the eggs.

Incubation

Ensure the hen has enough water and food, but don't be surprised if she doesn't drink or eat much. It's not uncommon for hens to lose weight while sitting on eggs, which is why they should raise only one or two clutches per year, allowing their bodies recovery time between hatchings. Also, monitor how much the hen

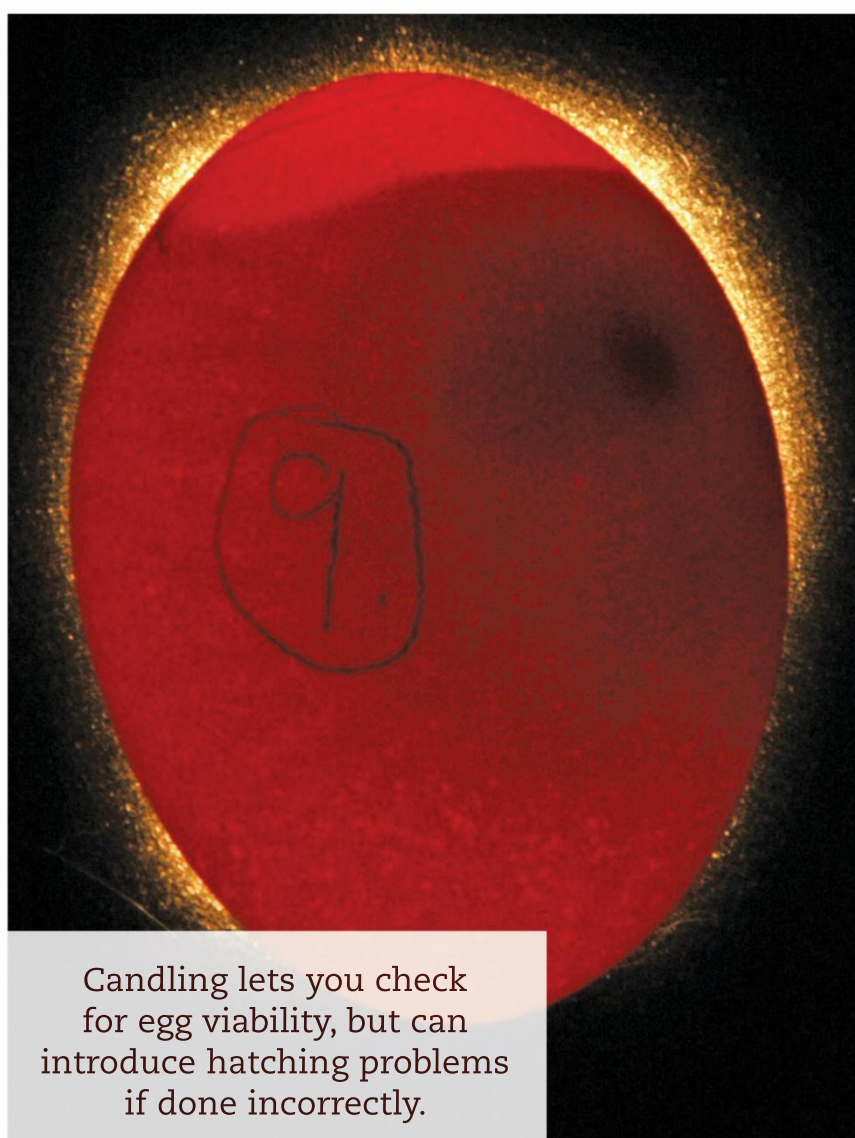
is sitting. Some hens start out very broody, but lose interest and don't sit enough to keep the eggs warm. If this happens, you're out of luck and will need to throw away the eggs.

Some people like to candle eggs to ensure that the hen isn't sitting on any bad ones. But remember, every time you handle eggs, you increase the risk of hatching problems. The benefit of candling is that you can remove any eggs that lack developing embryos, as these will rot if you leave them, and they'll make a stinky mess if they break. If you choose to candle, handle the eggs gently, removing and replacing them one at a time. Wait to candle eggs until day 7. After day 15, don't handle the eggs again.

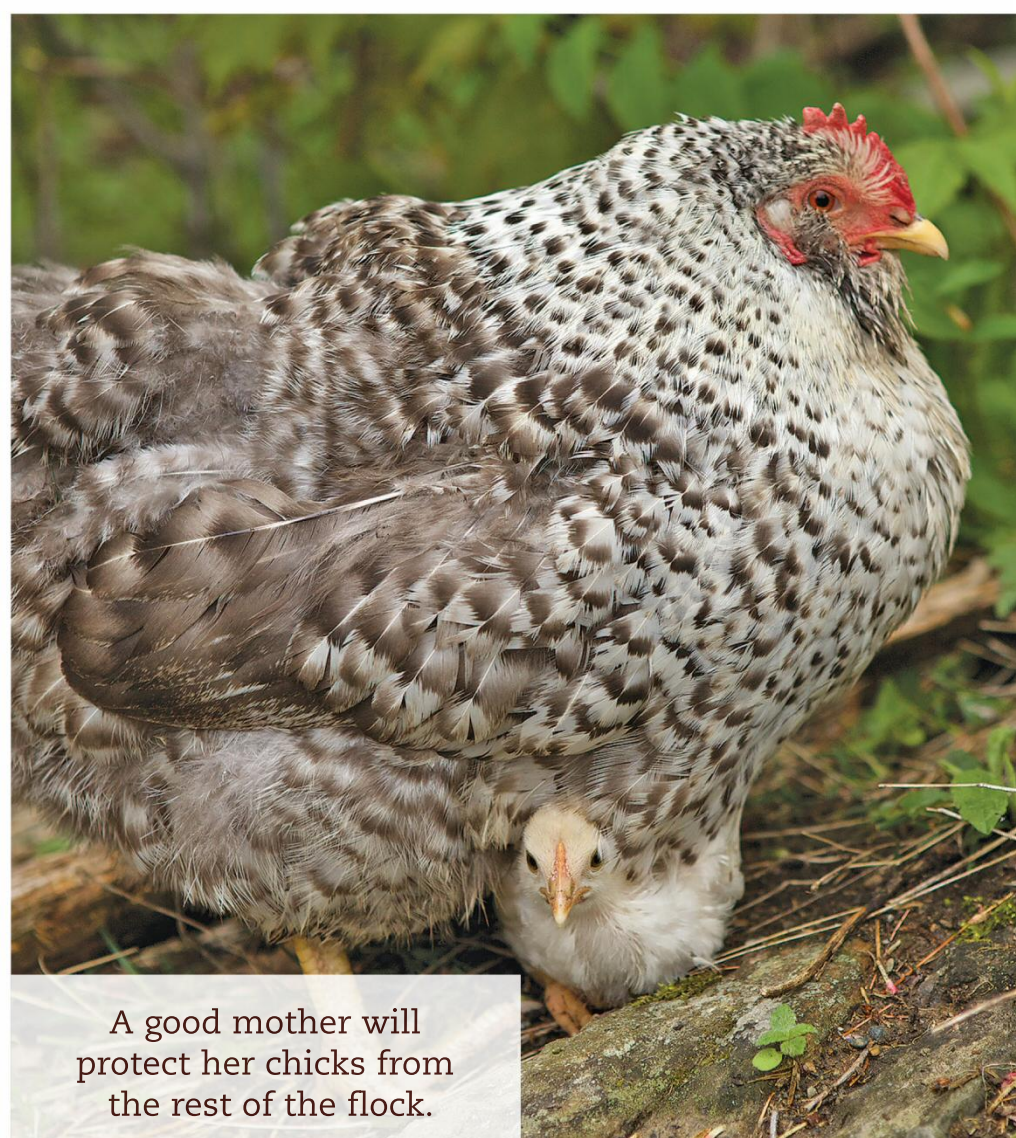
Hatching

The chicks should begin hatching at about day 21. They'll typically hatch out within a few hours of each other, but it can take up to three days for the entire clutch to hatch.

After a few chicks are born, the hen will do one of three things: She'll hop off the nest to care for her chicks, leaving the remaining unhatched chicks to die; she'll remain on the nest and not do much for her chicks (this is fine if the hen is isolated and still allows the chicks under her); or, most likely, she'll tend to her babies, leaving the eggs for a short time but returning to sit if she senses the chicks within are still viable.



Candling lets you check for egg viability, but can introduce hatching problems if done incorrectly.



A good mother will protect her chicks from the rest of the flock.

Chick Care

Once all the eggs have hatched, make sure the hen's a good mother. In rare instances, she might peck and kill the chicks, or ignore them altogether. In addition, you'll need to put a chick waterer and feeder in the cage. Within days, a good mother will show her chicks how to use them.

I recommend keeping the hen and chicks separated from the rest of the flock for at least a week. Some people transfer the mother and babies to the main hen-house right away, but mother hens aren't always good at protecting their chicks, and if you have a henhouse that's raised off the ground, the chicks may fall off the house ramp and die.

I put the mother and chicks in an old wire run placed inside the main chicken run, and cover the run with a tarp at night. This gives the mother and babies their own space, while also allowing the flock to become familiar with the chicks.

When you integrate the mother and chicks into the flock, stand by and make sure the other chickens don't harm the babies, though it's normal for them to peck the chicks out of curiosity. A good mother will chase off any bird that comes near.

If all seems well, leave the flock for 30 minutes, and then check them again. Check periodically throughout the day until you're satisfied the mother can protect her chicks from the flock.

Final Pointers

The mother hen will continue to do most of the work of raising the chicks, but you should make sure there are plenty of water sources available, since full-grown chickens may occasionally bully chicks away from waterers. Also pay attention to the height of your waterers, and if the chicks can't easily reach them, set out supplemental chick waterers.

If you've been giving the chicks medicated starter feed, you'll need to switch to a nonmedicated variety when you integrate them into the flock, because adult chickens love to eat chick food. At around 8 weeks, the chicks are ready for grower feed, which ups the protein they consume, ensuring optimal growth. Another option is to switch directly to flock feed once the chicks are integrated into the flock; some experts say this doesn't provide enough protein for chicks, but this is less of a problem if your flock gets some free-range time. Whatever feed you select, don't give chicks layer feed, because its high calcium levels can be harmful. A good rule of thumb is to switch to layer feed at 18 to 20 weeks. 🌱

Kristina Seleshanko has been raising chickens since she was a child. She's the author of 25 books, including *The Ultimate Dandelion Cookbook*. Read her blog at www.ProverbsThirtyOneWoman.Blogspot.com.



It's a good idea to keep newly hatched chicks and the mother hen away from other chickens for at least a week. When you do add them to the flock, stick around to make sure everyone gets along.



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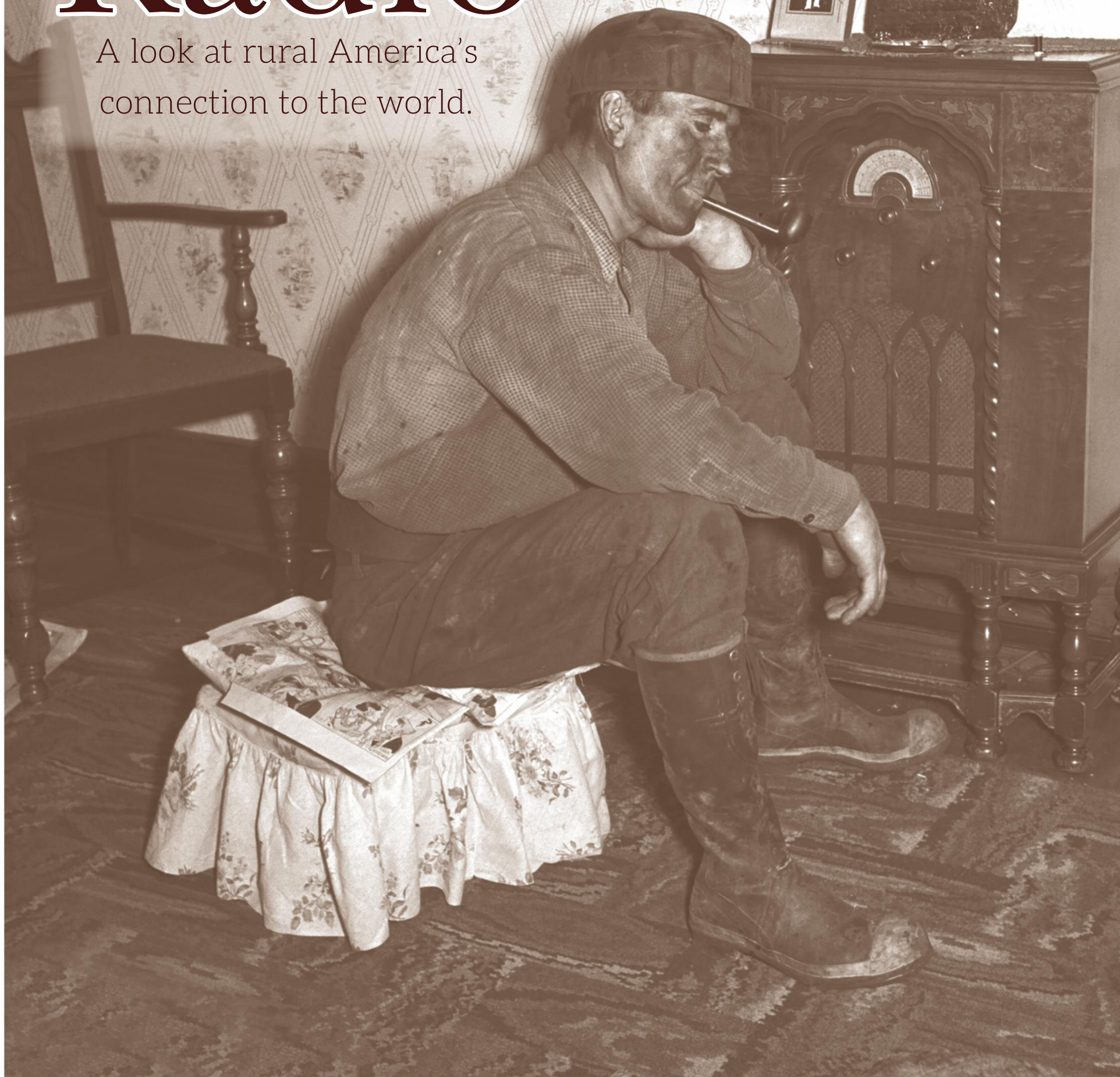


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Remembering the Radio

A look at rural America's
connection to the world.



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Only one original wooden knob on this old Zenith survived the fire. The author's 1929 Zenith tabletop radio (below) receives AM and shortwave signals.



By Clell G. Ballard

IN a world where instant communication is expected, it's hard to believe that not all that long ago, much of rural America was basically isolated from events of the day. Those who live in densely populated areas have difficulty visualizing vast areas where there are no trappings of civilization at all. In the wide expanses of Middle America, the farther one goes west, the more distance there is between farmsteads and rural towns. Where ranching is the main form of economic activity, it's not unusual to travel several hours to visit the closest neighbor.

Wireless Revolution

Henry Ford's Model T is credited with putting America on wheels. An equally important fact is often overlooked: Since the Model T was inexpensive enough that even small farmers could buy one (or at least a used one), it became the means of spreading information in rural areas. Neighborly visits and occasional forays into the nearest town were suddenly faster and easier, giving access to supplies and the latest news.

Then, with the advent of radio transmission, a wireless revolution took place. In the 1920s, radio programming was limited, and radio sets were extremely expensive. A top-of-the-line model could cost almost as much as a Model T Ford, which at one time could be bought new for just \$290 (approximately \$3,500 today). Even if rural families wanted a radio, the purchase price was too high, and most farms lacked the electricity necessary to run them. However, that didn't stop people from making an attempt to share in the excitement that a radio provided.





Wind-charging systems (left) were used to charge storage batteries that ran the radios. A typical console radio (right) with a fantastic cabinet from the early era had a hefty price tag.

Since some source of electricity was necessary, it became common for rural sets to be run on batteries. The small, square 6-volt battery that was also used in large flashlight-type lamps of the day became a power source. Battery technology was in its infancy, and battery longevity was quite short. Replacement batteries were costly, so radios were used only for a short period of time each day.

The 6-volt automobile battery offered an alternative. Although extremely heavy and bulky to the point that having one in the house was unsightly and inconvenient, car batteries were used a lot. They had two advantages: Their capacity was much greater than the small batteries, and they could be recharged. The recharging mechanism almost always consisted of a wind-driven generator mounted on a rooftop pole where air currents flowed unrestricted. In the Plains states, there was never a shortage of wind.

Making It Affordable

Early on, the cost of a complete radio setup, a viable power source, and a recharging apparatus was impossible for all but the wealthy. Even if programs could be obtained with the simple antennas of the day, radios were out of reach of most farm folk.

It didn't take long before American ingenuity came into play. Handy individuals discovered that the radio mechanism itself could be purchased without an elaborate case. In those days, radio cabinets were built with the same quality as pianos are today. Phenomenal craftsmanship contributed to the expensive price tag. Many bought the "chassis" and built their own cabinets. The finished product, which worked just as well as a commercially produced radio, provided the news

and entertainment that was so eagerly sought. The homemade product may have looked a little crude, but nobody cared.

Tabletop Convenience

By the late 1920s, enterprising companies began producing tabletop models in addition to the common consoles. Although still quite large, the tabletop radio didn't take up any floor space in the relatively small homes of the day. My wife and I own a 1929 Zenith tabletop model that receives both AM and international shortwave signals. A switch on the back is used to select 110-volt household current or 6-volt operation. It has a regular cord, plus two fairly long cables with alligator clamps that fasten to a storage battery.

Multiple tube-type radios have a reputation for mellow sound, and our old Zenith is no exception. The fairly large speaker provides soothing music and even makes voices more pleasant to listen to. We've always used it on household current. Our external antenna (a special braided copper wire extending several hundred feet from the house) makes it possible to receive the closest station, which is 75 miles away.

When we were raising our five children during the 1970s and '80s, we chose not to have a television. The old radio was our source of news and entertainment for almost two decades. Guess it was kind of quaint that the family gathered around the radio every Sunday night to listen to "CBS Radio Mystery Theater," a broadcast staple in those years.

Repairs a Vexing Challenge

The vacuum tubes that make a radio work have a limited life span. When one of them ceases to work,

the radio does too. In more than four decades of regular use, our Zenith has needed a new tube only three times. Each time, though, it became increasingly difficult to find someone to fix it.

One day in 1990, when the Zenith was turned on, all it produced was static. Since it obviously needed a new tube, I searched for someone to repair it. I finally found a gentleman quite some distance away. I left the radio at his shop, with the understanding we'd have to be without it for several weeks.

I didn't hear anything for an extended period of time, so I drove to the town to talk to the repairman. When I pulled up, I was shocked to find that the repair shop building was gone. It had burned to the ground in a middle-of-the-night fire. I was sick at heart. Although the building was insured, the contents weren't. Even if an insurance claim had been available, it would never replace the old radio that was a part of our family.

The Phoenix Radio

A couple of weeks later, the thought came to me that maybe I could find some small part of the radio in what was left of the building. Saving *something* would be better than nothing.

I returned to the site and walked through the ashes. Absolutely nothing was identifiable. For some reason, I stopped to lift a hunk of something that hadn't burned completely. You can't imagine the joy I felt when I discovered our old radio sitting on the floor. Apparently

the repairman had taken the radio chassis out of its case and set both pieces on the floor. During the fire, a piece of debris fell over it, protecting it from the heat. Although badly damaged from water, it was basically all there.

I excitedly scooped it up and took it home. I took the radio mechanism to a repair shop that specialized in old radios, and it was returned to working order with only minor repairs. While it was being repaired, I spent a lot of time attempting to restore the wooden case back to its original appearance. I couldn't find any information on resurrecting a quality piece of furniture that had been soaked in water, so I was on my own. I'm pleased to report that my efforts were almost 100 percent successful.

By 1991, the Zenith had returned to daily service. Today, almost a century after it was manufactured, the old Zenith continues to provide its mellow sounds in our home. Knobs on the front of the unit offer the only clue to the nearly disastrous fire. Careful examination shows that three are reproductions. Our little corner of rural America is more pleasant because of a radio that's an amazing survivor. ✿

Clell G. Ballard is a retired high school teacher. He's worked on farms since he was in grade school, including 53 summers spent working on his uncle's dryland hay and grain ranch.

Homemade Cabinets

Radios dating to the 1920s are unusual today. Occasionally, one with a beautifully crafted cabinet is found, and such pieces are prized by collectors. That fine craftsmanship came at a cost few could afford back in the day. Those on a tight budget made do, building a homemade cabinet to hold the manufactured radio chassis.

Just such a piece was found at a long abandoned homestead in a sparsely populated part of southern Idaho. The top of the enclosure was broken, and the whole thing was almost completely covered with bird droppings. Later, as it was being cleaned and repaired, it was discovered that the wood came from a dynamite box. The dynamite maker's name is prominently displayed on the inside surface of the panels.


The round opening for the speaker presented a challenge for the home craftsman, who was unable



to make the circle perfectly uniform. However, the cabinet's front is a nearly identical replica of a piece manufactured by Zenith, complete with parallel bars in the center. The craftsman most likely had a photograph of a factory cabinet in his possession, that he did his best to replicate.

Peaceful **PORCHES**





A look at the importance
and beauty of porches
through the years.

Article and photos
by Dorothy Rieke

IN the 1930s, social events for children were almost unheard of. However, I once attended a tea party hosted by my two best friends, held in the long, narrow, enclosed porch of their grandmother's house. The porch, built on the east side of the house, was pleasant and quaint, with a wicker table and chairs, an old water pump, and a variety of green plants.

For the tea party, my friends and their grandmother moved in a small table with three chairs. The table was covered with a lace curtain, and then set with small plates, saucers, and cups. A larger plate held peanut butter and jelly sandwiches cut into small triangles, and a pretty pink dish was filled with hulled black walnuts. Another bowl held slices of bananas, and a teapot contained fresh lemonade.

The sight of the table and refreshments, as well as visiting with my two best friends, was a special treat, especially on that lovely porch. The entire atmosphere made it an unforgettable occasion.

Multiple Purpose

Through the years, porches have served many purposes: a shaded haven where women could pod peas or snap green beans, a gathering area for loved ones to keep up on family and community happenings, a serene place to watch children play in the yard or to take in the beauty of the trees and flowers, and a quiet spot for courting couples.

Because of their usefulness, porches have been popular across multiple cultures since some of the earliest times in civilization. In ancient Greek and Roman architecture, the peristyle was a porch that was formed by columns that often surrounded a garden. In Italy, piazzas took the place of porches. Even in Africa, most shotgun houses had porches. From the early 1880s to the mid-1920s, building porches on houses became "a way of life" in the United States.

Advantages & Styles

Back in the day, homes were often small, so porches were a common place for folks to entertain family and friends. Porches also allowed people to forge a connection with nature, because they'd often sit on the porch and observe sunsets, rainbows, and the sky, while at the same time breathing in the fresh scents of grass and hay, flowers, and approaching rain storms.

In addition, vintage heating devices, such as kerosene stoves, often emitted fumes that affected the indoor air quality in older homes, so porches provided a place to escape to an environment that was fresh and welcoming. And in summer, when houses became hot and stuffy, people would go out on the porch to cool off.

This type of porch was
utilized for food prep during
daylight hours, and as a cool
parlor in the evenings.

Porches of this nature are solid additions to a house.



The porch on this farmhouse affords space for entertaining, gazing at the stars, and simply enjoying nature.



Porches also protected front doors, hardware, trim, lighting, and foyers from rain, snow, sun, and wind.

And we can't forget how important porches were when it came to courting and relationships. Many couples got to know each other while sitting on porch swings. In fact, it's quite likely that many of those couples got engaged, and possibly even planned their wedding, while sitting on a porch.

Not all porches were the same, though. There were several different styles, and many of them can still be seen today.

Most farmhouses featured a simple covered porch, meaning a roof of some sort covered the porch. Screened porches, in which window screens enclosed the porch, were another option for homeowners. Wrap-around porches, usually constructed on Victorian-style homes, circle the front and sides of the house, and sometimes wrap around the back as well. Rain porches have a roof that extends beyond the porch deck, and columns built from the ground up, which protects the porch from rain and other weather elements. Portico porches have a roof supported by columns over a walkway. Loggia porches, most often seen on large public buildings, and sometimes on luxurious residential properties, are covered porches that run the length of a building, with

columns or arches on the open sides. Sun porches, typically enclosed with glass, offer protection from the elements, while allowing full exposure to sunlight. A stoop, a small landing at the top of stairs that's usually covered by a roof, is also a type of porch, but one that's more common in urban areas.

Porch Popularity

Through the years, the use and importance of porches diminished as the times and ways of life changed in the United States.

As women began working outside the home, there wasn't as much time to spend on the porch. When televisions became popular in the 1950s, people began spending evenings in their living rooms, rather than out on their porches. In addition, as the average size of houses grew, it became more expensive to build a home with a porch.

The advent of better roads and automobiles may have also led to the demise of spending time on the porch, as exhaust fumes, noise, and heavy traffic made it less pleasing to sit out on a porch close to the road. And let's not forget that with the telephone, neighbors and friends could talk to each other from their own homes, without having to get together physically.

Wrap-around porches add character to homes, and are usually seen on Victorian-style houses.



A sun porch allows the sun's light to shine in, while at the same time providing protection from the outdoor elements.



A stoop is a simple, small landing covered by a roof, and is most commonly seen in urban settings.



Decades later, the porch again gained some popularity, and then faded again. It's a trend that'll probably continue to come and go, depending on the times.

Appeal & Importance

Whether popular or not, porches no doubt enhance a home. Not only do they add appeal with decorative posts, spindles, and balusters, but they'll always be a great place to socialize, catch up on the latest news, relax, and enjoy nature's beauty. Add some comfortable furniture and lighting, and the porch just may become your new favorite place to spend time. 🌿

Dorothy Rieke and her husband live on the farm her grandfather purchased in 1883, in southeastern Nebraska. Dorothy was a schoolteacher for more than 40 years before retiring. She enjoys writing, and her work has appeared in various publications.

Do you have a porch you love?
Send your high-quality photos to
TSmith@CappersFarmer.com, and we just
might publish them in an upcoming issue.



This is the house, built at the turn of the century, where Dorothy and her friends had their tea party on the enclosed porch.



Pretty Patches

Use stylish repairs to extend the life of,
or simply beautify, old garments.

Article and photos
by Rebecca Martin

POPULAR in the early 20th century, patches later fell by the wayside. However, they're back in style now. This means that by patching your worn clothes, not only can you get more wear out of them, but if you embellish those patches with embroidery, you can be fashionable at the same time.

So, why not be stylish while saving money? I recently patched the worn-out elbows on a favorite jacket with some fabric recycled from another garment, and it turned out great. ✨

Rebecca Martin is a *Capper's Farmer* editor who enjoys making all types of useful projects, using a variety of crafting techniques.

Tools & Materials

- Garment to be patched
- Supplies for making template (object for tracing, cardstock, marker)
- Patching fabric
- Tailor's chalk
- Scissors
- Double-sided fusible interfacing
- Steam iron and ironing board
- Embroidery floss
- Embroidery needle

STEP 1: Take a good look at the garment you wish to patch, so you can determine what size and shape your finished patch needs to be. In examining the torn elbows on my jacket, I realized a commercial oval-shaped patch wouldn't be suitable, because the rear sleeve panel was tapered, and oval commercial patches wouldn't fit the taper. So instead, I created a custom template that tapered like the sleeve.

NOTE: To make a customized template, look around your home for objects with the right size and shape that you can trace. I used canning jar lids of two sizes that were of the right diameter for the width of the jacket's sleeve panel, and on a piece of cardstock (actually a greeting card), I traced around the lids (see photos A and B at right), and then connected the two circles with a tapered line between their widest points (see photos C and D).

STEP 2: Position your cardstock template on the patch fabric, and then trace around it with tailor's chalk. Remove the template, and then chalk an additional line $\frac{1}{4}$ inch outside the first line, and cut out the patch on this outer line.

STEP 3: Lay your template on a piece of double-sided fusible interfacing. Trace around the template, and then cut it out along the marked line. Following the manufacturer's directions, iron the interfacing to the reverse side of the patch. On my patch, I folded over the $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch edge and ironed it to lay flat on the unfused side of the interfacing (what will become the inside of the patch), which produced a smooth, finished edge.

STEP 4: Peel off the paper on the unfused side of the interfacing. Working on an ironing board, smooth out the sleeve panel and position the patch to cover the tears. Make sure the $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch hem is folded under along the edges. Iron the patch to the jacket. The edges will remain loose because of the folded-under hem.

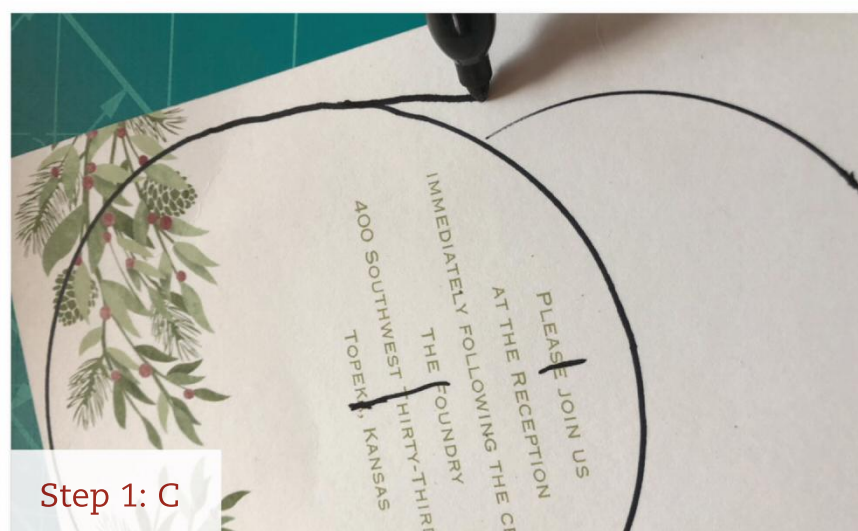
STEP 5: Using an embroidery needle, secure the edges and add embellishment to your patch by embroi-



Step 1: A



Step 1: B



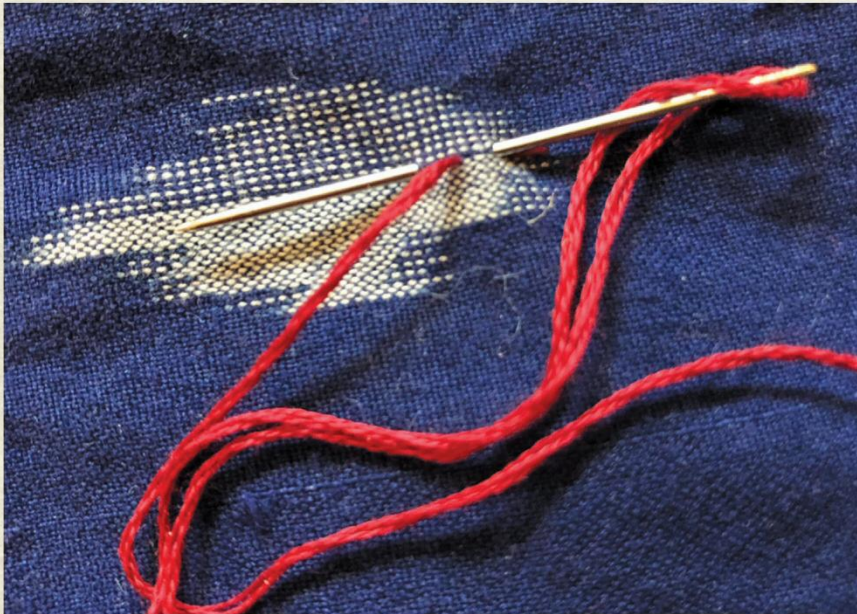
Step 1: C



Step 1: D

dering around all the edges in a blanket stitch, using a contrasting color of embroidery floss.

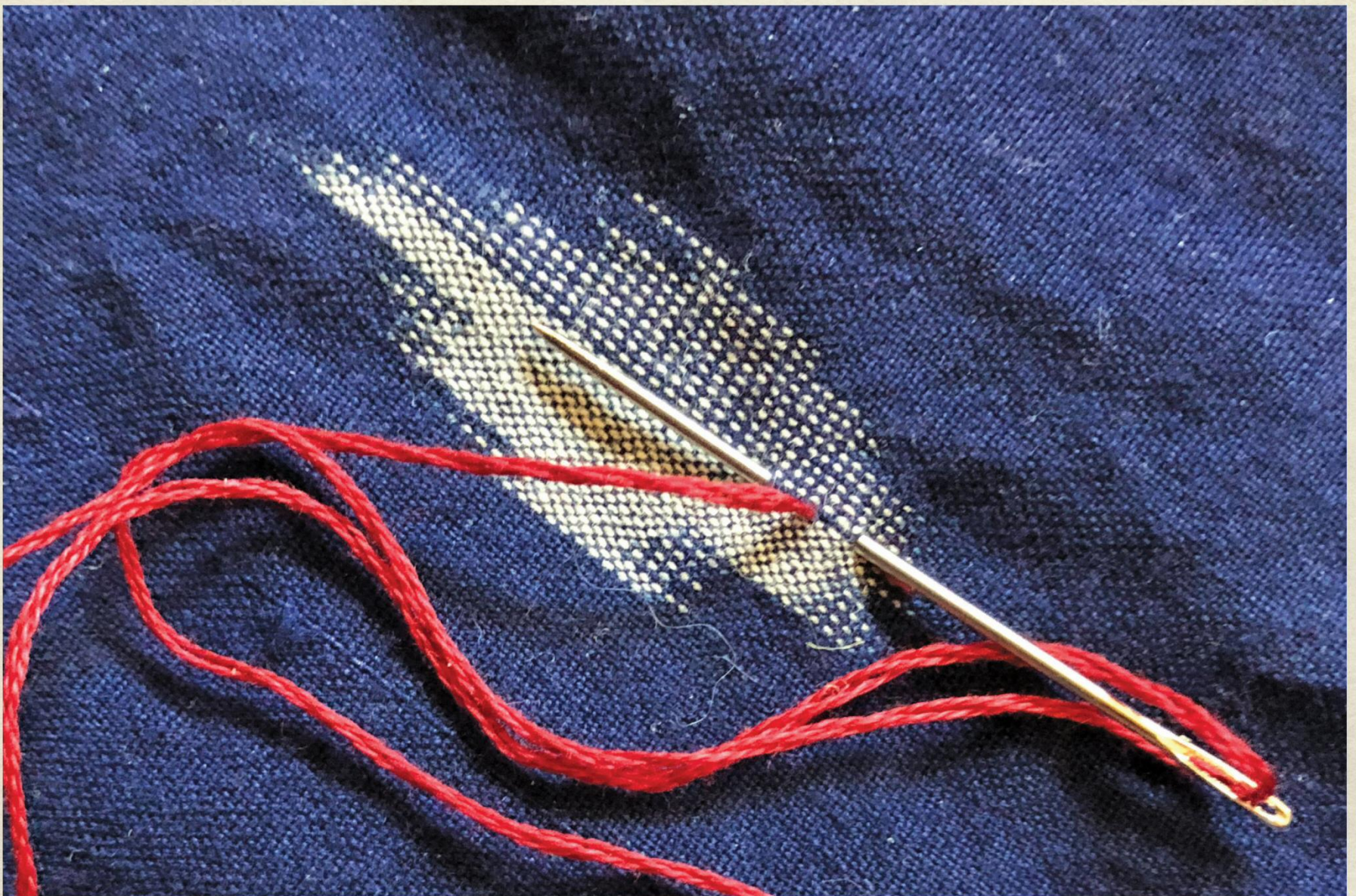
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Blanket Stitching & Embroidering

Blanket stitch is a good edging stitch that's fairly easy for beginners to execute. First, cut a length of embroidery floss about a foot long, and then divide the individual strands so you'll be working with only three of the six. Thread the embroidery needle, and knot one end of the floss. Push the needle up through the jacket fabric very close to the patch, and pull the thread through so the knot rests on the underside. About $\frac{3}{8}$ inch to one side, and $\frac{3}{8}$ inch onto the patch, push the needle down through both layers of fabric (patch and underlying jacket), but don't pull the thread taut just yet. First, push the needle back up through the jacket only, directly below where the needle has exited the patch, and above the loose thread. Now, pull the thread taut. The thread will form a reversed "L." Repeat these stitches around the circumference of the patch. When you've reached the first stitch, push the needle down through the jacket and tie a knot to secure the thread.

If you're confident in your embroidery skills, you can add embellishment to the patch itself, as I did. If you choose to do so, it's best done at the end of Step 2, just after you've cut out the patch. I worked embroidered designs on the patch fabric's woven designs using a simple line of backstitch ending in a single loop of chain stitch.



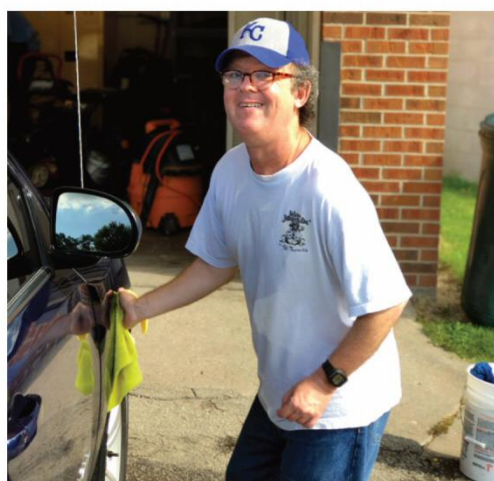


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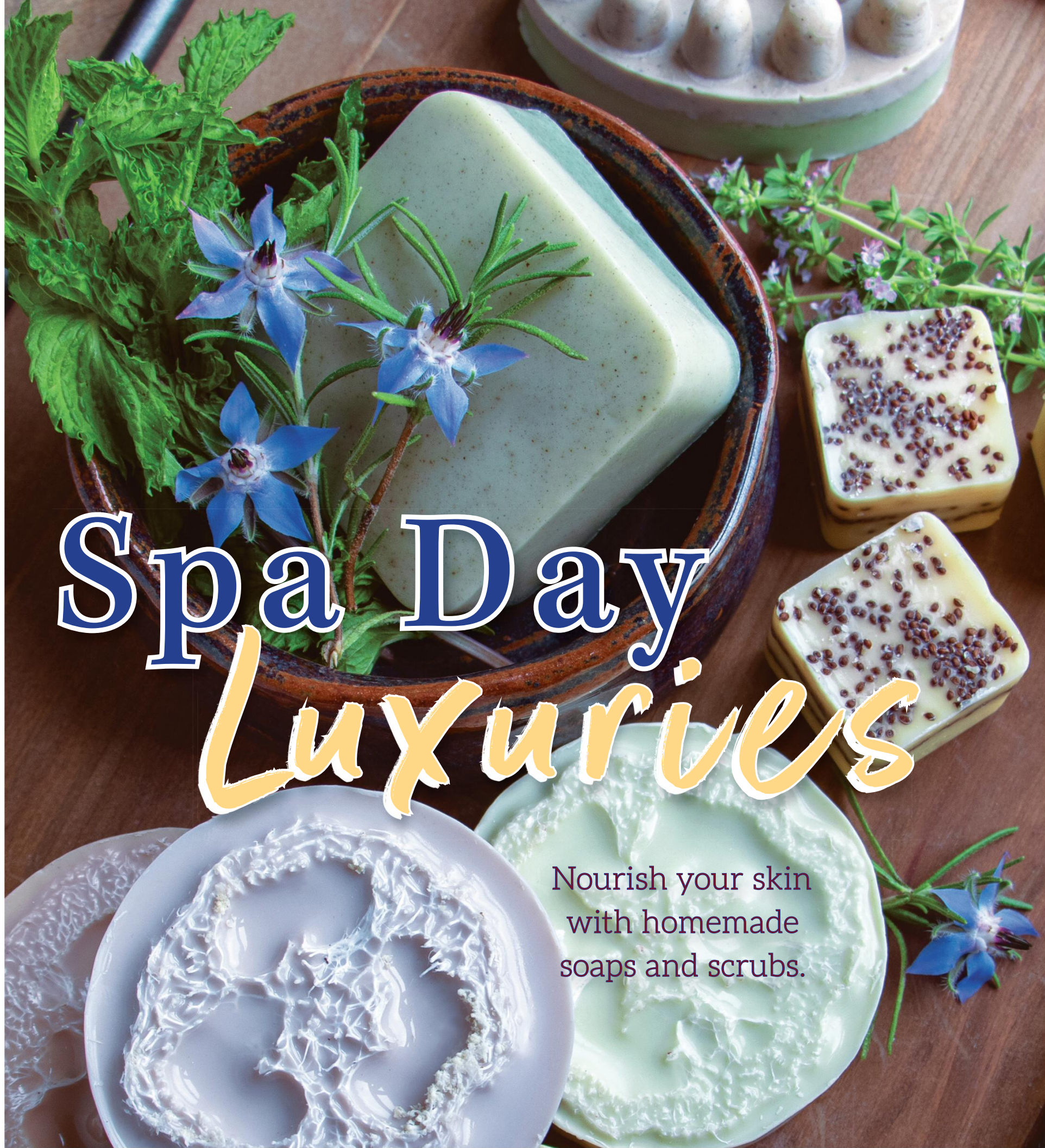
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Spa Day Luxuries

Nourish your skin
with homemade
soaps and scrubs.

Article and photos by Jan Berry

CREATE a spa experience in the comfort of your own home with soaps and scrubs designed to polish, cleanse, and pamper. You'll appreciate the clean lines of Charcoal & Sea Salt Spa Bars, Floating Dead Sea Mud Bars are sure to become a favorite, and Pink Grapefruit Pedicure Scrubs will get your feet in tip-top shape for sandal weather. 🌿

Jan Berry is a published author, herbalist, soapmaker, and owner of the website The Nerdy Farm Wife (www.TheNerdyFarmWife.com), which offers online courses for making soaps and more. She lives in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia with her family. This article is excerpted with permission from her book, *Easy Homemade Melt & Pour Soaps* (Page Street Publishing).

Charcoal & Sea Salt Spa Bars

Yields 4 bars.

These simple yet elegant, double-sided bars feature deep-cleansing charcoal, along with skin-clearing tea tree oil, soothing lavender essential oil, mineral-rich sea salt, and a touch of silk for added luxury. In this recipe, I divided the essential oils, scenting the charcoal half with tea tree, and the white half with lavender. For a more blended fragrance, you can combine both essential oils into the melted soap base before dividing it in half and proceeding with the recipe.

- 16 ounces shea or goat's milk soap base
- 3/8 teaspoon lavender essential oil
- 4 oval soap molds (4 ounces each)
- Rubbing alcohol, for spritzing
- 1 teaspoon sea salt
- 1/2 teaspoon charcoal, diluted in 1 1/2 teaspoons rubbing alcohol
- 1/4 teaspoon tea tree essential oil
- 1/4 teaspoon liquid silk amino acids, optional

- 1 Place soap base in the top of a double boiler over medium-low heat, and heat until melted, stirring often, about 20 to 30 minutes. Alternatively, melt it in the microwave, stirring every 30 seconds or so.
- 2 Evenly divide soap between two containers.
- 3 Stir lavender essential oil into one container, and mix well. Evenly divide mixture among four soap molds, filling each one about half full. Immediately spritz the tops with rubbing alcohol, and quickly sprinkle each with 1/4 teaspoon sea salt. Spritz again, generously, with rubbing alcohol, and let stand for 5 to 10 minutes to firm up.



- 4 Into the second container of melted soap, stir in the diluted charcoal, tea tree essential oil, and silk amino acids, if using. Monitor the temperature, bringing it below 135 degrees Fahrenheit to prevent melting the lavender layers.
 - 5 When the charcoal soap is ready, spritz the lavender soap layers in the molds with rubbing alcohol, and then evenly divide the charcoal soap between the molds, filling them almost to the top. Spritz again with rubbing alcohol to eliminate any air bubbles on the surface.
 - 6 Let the soaps cool completely, about 2 to 3 hours, or until hardened.
 - 7 Unmold the bars, wrap them tightly, and store them in a cool, dry place, out of direct sunlight.
- NOTE:** For a cool, minty version, to the first container (white layer), add 1/2 teaspoon of French green clay mixed with 1 1/2 teaspoons of rubbing alcohol, and use peppermint essential oil in place of lavender.

.....

Floating Dead Sea Mud Bars

Yields 4 bars.

These unique bars, featuring Dead Sea mud clay powder, will float in your bathtub, instead of sinking like most soaps do. Dead Sea products are renowned for treating a multitude of skin ailments, making them a spa treatment staple. To use wet Dead Sea mud instead of the dry clay powder, simply omit the alcohol and blend the mud with the glycerin before making the recipe, and then be sure to strain out any stray clumps of mud before whipping. Jojoba or olive oil is added to keep the soap from being too drying, while aloe vera gel soothes skin and adds a small boost to the lather. Glycerin helps whipped melt-and-pour soap hold its form better and leads to a higher success rate, but if you don't have any, you can leave it out. It'll just have a slightly different texture.



16 ounces goat's milk or other white soap base
½ teaspoon jojoba or olive oil
½ teaspoon aloe vera gel
2 teaspoons glycerin
1 tablespoon Dead Sea mud clay powder, mixed
with 2 to 3 tablespoons rubbing alcohol
1 teaspoon lavender or peppermint essential oil
¼ teaspoon tea tree essential oil
4 rectangular soap molds (4 ounces each)
Rubbing alcohol, for spritzing

① Place soap base in a heatproof, 4-cup glass container, and place in the top of a double boiler over medium-low heat. Heat until melted, stirring often, about 20 to 30 minutes. Alternatively, melt it in the microwave, stirring every 30 seconds or so.

② Stir in oil, aloe vera gel, glycerin, diluted mud clay powder, and essential oils, and mix well. Set

aside to cool, stirring occasionally, until it reaches 125 to 130 degrees Fahrenheit.

③ Meanwhile, get a hand-held mixer ready, and set your molds near your work surface.

④ When the soap reaches 125 to 130 degrees, set a timer for 25 seconds, and then use the hand-held mixer to whip the soap on low to medium-low speed. If you have an infrared thermometer, monitor the temperature while you mix, as it will drop. Stop mixing after 25 to 30 seconds, or before the temperature drops to 115 degrees.

⑤ Immediately pour the whipped soap into the molds. Lightly spray the tops with rubbing alcohol.

⑥ Let the soap bars cool and set in the molds for at least 8 to 12 hours. (Removing them too soon may cause the sides to stick.)

⑦ Unmold the bars, wrap them tightly, and store them in a cool, dry place, out of direct sunlight.

Pink Grapefruit Pedicure Scrubs

Yields 10 cubes.

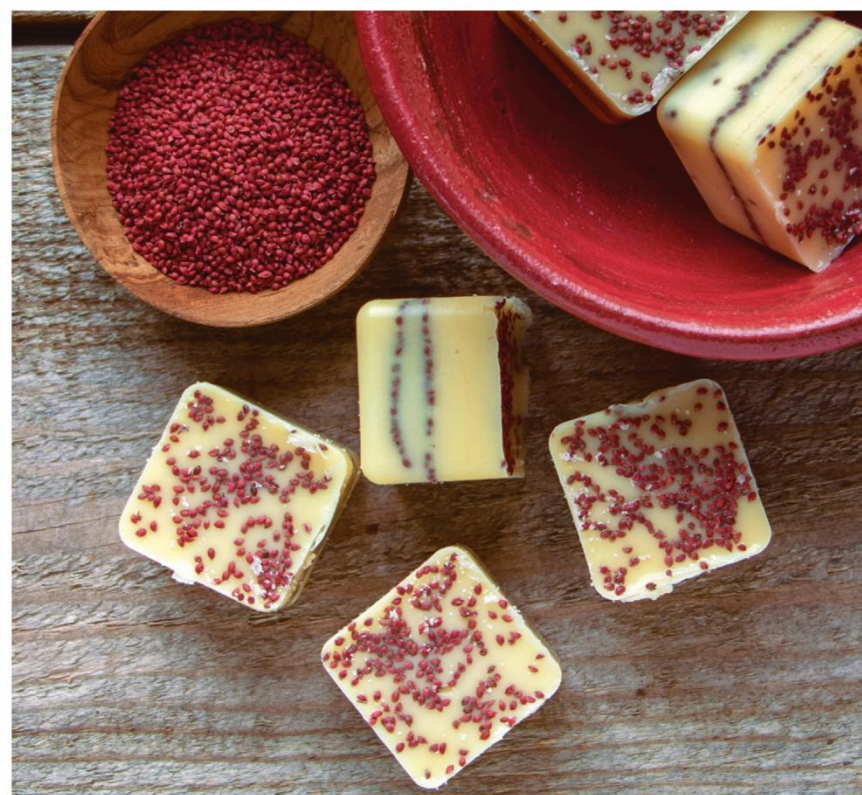
Designed especially for calloused skin, these scrub cubes polish and smooth away rough skin, helping to get your feet in tip-top shape for sandal season. They include ultra-fine pink Himalayan salt and cranberry seeds, which are both exfoliants, and they're enriched with apricot kernel oil and lanolin, which have intense healing properties. If you're vegan or allergic to lanolin, simply use more oil, or substitute shea butter.

10 ounces triple butter or other white soap base,
cut into 1-inch cubes
1 teaspoon apricot kernel, sweet almond, or
sunflower oil
¼ teaspoon lanolin
10 drops sea buckthorn oil, optional
¾ teaspoon pink grapefruit essential oil
⅜ teaspoon orange essential oil
1 tablespoon ultra-fine pink Himalayan salt
1½ tablespoons cranberry seeds
Silicone ice cube tray (1 ounce cavities)
Rubbing alcohol, for spritzing

① Place soap base in a heatproof glass jar or container, and place in the top of a double boiler over medium-low heat. Heat until melted, about 20 to 30 minutes, stirring often. Alternatively, melt it in the microwave, stirring every 30 seconds or so.

② Stir in apricot kernel oil, lanolin, and sea buckthorn oil, if using. Add essential oils, and mix well.

③ Place the salt and cranberry seeds near your work surface.



④ Working quickly, pour a small amount of melted soap base in the bottom of 10 cavities of the silicone tray. Immediately sprinkle them with a thin layer of cranberry seeds. Spritz with alcohol. Add another thin layer of soap, just enough to barely cover the seeds. Spritz with alcohol, and sprinkle on a layer of salt. Continue alternating thin layers of soap with thin layers of salt and cranberry seeds, until the cavities are full. Top with a final layer of cranberry seeds and salt, pressing lightly so they adhere. Spritz with alcohol.

⑤ Let the cubes set up in the mold for 3 to 4 hours, or until completely cooled and hardened.

⑥ Remove and store the cubes in an airtight container until needed.

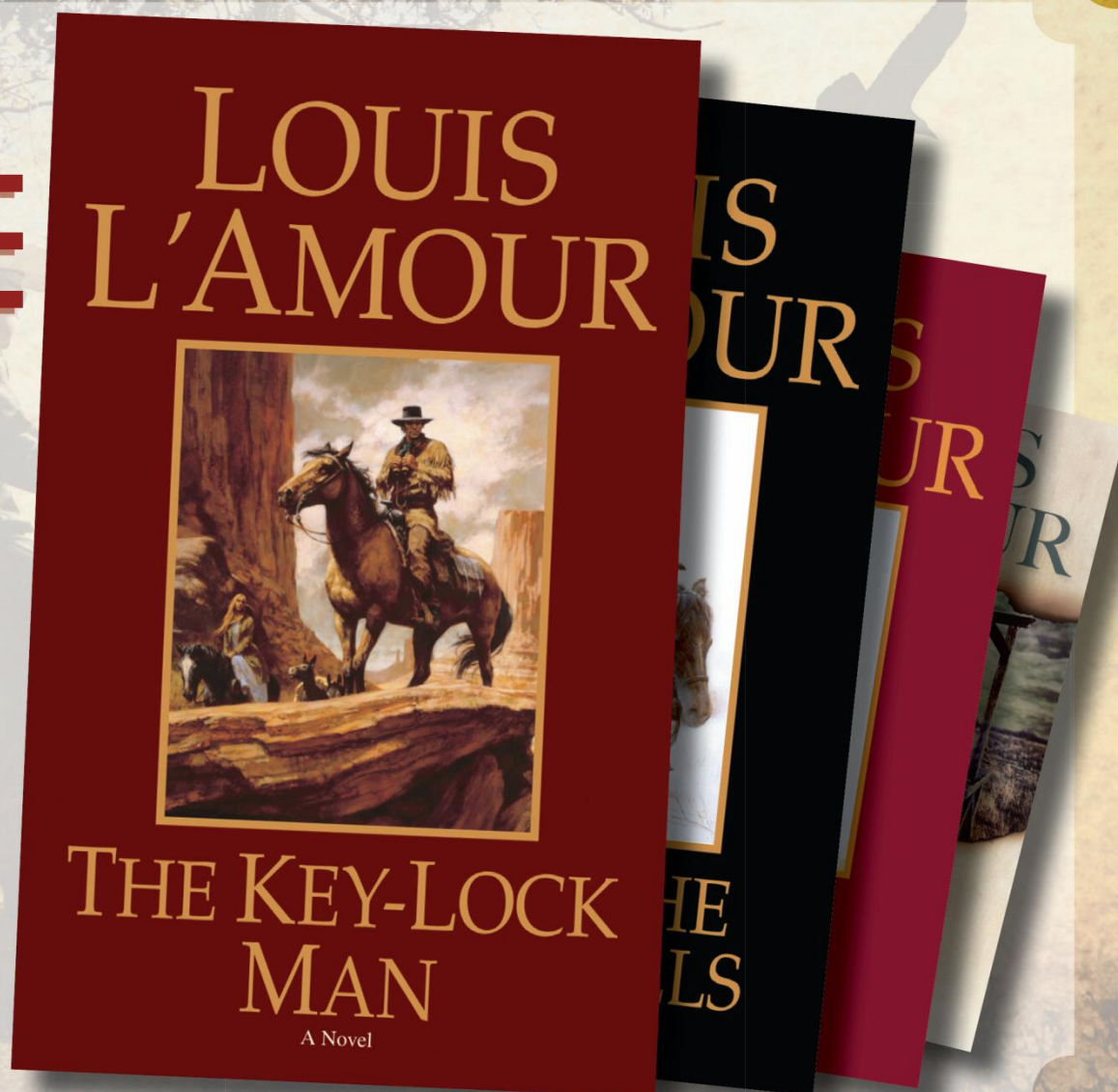
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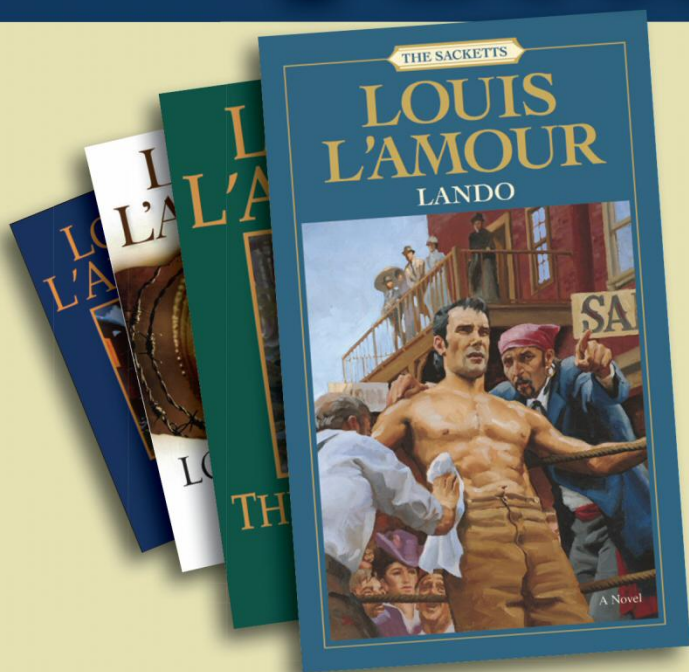
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- How the West Was Won

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- Passin' Through
- Milo Talon
- Kilrone
- The Shadow Riders

10094

- Rivers West
- The Rider of Lost Creek
- To the Far Blue Mountains
- The Proving Trail

Summer's TASTY FLAVORS

Turn your garden goodness and farm fresh eggs into delicious dishes.



Article and photos by Shaye Elliott

SUMMERTIME is a season that's welcome around the farm. Summer, in many ways, gives us permission to be as busy or as lazy as we'd like. We can fill our days with harvesting vegetables, weeding, cleaning, and preserving, but the days can also be just as easily filled with picnics, playtime, lounging by the pond, taking long drives, or swimming in the river. It's the time when we get to celebrate what the land is offering up, because our hard work during spring literally comes to fruition.

Summer mornings start early for us, so we can complete the bulk of the livestock and gardening chores

before the heat of the day arrives with the rising sun. We watch it peek over the ridgeline, and then we race to get the milk in the fridge, gather the eggs, and fill the garden basket with the daily harvest. 🌱

SEE RECIPES ON PAGES 79-80

Shaye Elliott is the founder of the blog The Elliott Homestead (www.TheElliottHomestead.com/Blog). She and her husband are developing a farm in the Pacific Northwest. This is excerpted with permission from her book, *Seasons at the Farm* (Lyons Press).

Summer Quiche

Yields 8 servings.

- 1 ⅓ cups all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon plus a pinch of sea salt, divided
- ½ cup plus 1 tablespoon butter, chilled, cut into small pieces, divided
- 9 eggs, divided
- 2 small yellow onions, minced
- 3 medium sweet peppers, seeded and chopped
- 1 ear of corn, kernels cut off (about 1 cup)
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 4 ounces cream cheese, optional
- 1 cup grated aged cheddar cheese
- 2 tablespoons minced parsley

① In a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, combine flour and ½ teaspoon salt. With mixer on medium-low speed, drop

in ½ cup of butter pieces, a few at a time, and mix until dough resembles coarse sand. Add 1 egg, and mix to combine.

② Remove dough from mixer. Wrap in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes.

③ Remove dough from refrigerator, and flour a work surface. Use a rolling pin, and additional flour as needed, to roll dough into a 12-inch round.

④ Line a 9-inch springform cake pan with aluminum foil. Gently lift dough round and place over cake pan. Lightly and carefully press dough into pan with your fingertips. Use any excess dough hanging over the sides to patch holes, if needed. (Make sure there aren't cracks or holes, as the dough will be holding a liquid filling.)

⑤ Place pan in refrigerator. Preheat oven to 375 F.

⑥ Melt remaining butter in a small skillet over medium-high heat. Add onions, peppers, and corn, and sauté until soft, about 4 to 6 minutes. Turn off heat, and set skillet aside.

⑦ In a stand mixer, combine remaining eggs, cream, and cream cheese, if using. Add cheddar and a pinch of sea salt, and mix to combine. Add sautéed vegetables and parsley, and mix until just combined. Pour mixture into cold crust.

⑧ Bake for 40 to 45 minutes, or until top is lightly browned and center has just the slightest jiggle.

⑨ Let quiche stand for a few minutes before removing from pan. Cool for another couple of minutes before slicing and serving.

NOTE: The dough can be made in advance, if desired, and kept in the refrigerator for up to three days.

My Favorite Potato Salad

Yields about 16 to 20 servings.

- 4 pounds russet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes
- ½ cup plus 1 ½ teaspoons sea salt, divided
- 1 cup full-fat plain yogurt
- 2 teaspoons grainy mustard
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 2 shallots, minced
- 1 cup minced celery
- 5 tablespoons minced fresh parsley
- 6 hard-boiled eggs, peeled and sliced

① Combine potatoes and ½ cup sea salt in a large stockpot. Cover with water, and bring to a boil. Reduce heat, simmer until fork-tender, about 10 to 12 minutes, and drain. Transfer potatoes to a large bowl, and set aside to cool.

② In a medium-sized bowl, combine yogurt, mustard, remaining

sea salt, pepper, and shallots. Mix well, and set aside to allow flavors to blend.

③ Add celery, parsley, and eggs to potatoes. Pour in yogurt mixture, and stir gently but thor-

oughly to combine. Season with a little additional salt and pepper, if needed.

④ Chill well before serving. Garnish with a pinch of additional parsley, if desired.



Caramelized Peaches

Yields 6 servings.

8 large, very ripe peaches, peeled
½ cup butter
1 cup dehydrated whole cane sugar
1 cup cream
Pinch of sea salt
2 tablespoons chopped fresh mint
2 tablespoons chopped almonds

① Cut peaches in half, and remove pits. Set aside.

② Heat butter, cane sugar, cream, and sea salt in a pan over low heat until butter is melted and ingredients have melded. Stir gently to combine. Continue heating mixture until it starts to look like caramel, about 5 minutes longer. (There's no need to stir it at this point, but keep a close eye on it. You don't want it to burn, but you have to give it time to caramelize.)

③ When mixture looks and smells like caramel, add the peaches. Cook for 3 minutes, flip, and cook for an additional 3 minutes, or until heated through.

④ Serve peaches immediately, topped with a sprinkling of fresh chopped mint and almonds. Stir in a dash of additional cream, as well, if desired.



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How-To Wisdom from the Elliott Homestead

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Garden's Fruitful *Finale*

Use these methods to preserve an abundance
of end-of-the-season tomatoes.

By Joan Gussow

MY late husband titled one of his vividly evocative pastels "August Madness in the Garden." And it is. The garden is bursting with life this time of year, and the plants overwhelm my efforts to keep them within bounds.

These are the months when New York summer storms, hurrying through to drop their loads of water, pull behind them fresh mornings with a hint of fall. That trace of coolness in the air tells me it's not enough to graze myself sick on the produce, but that I've got to put some of it by for the months to come.

In most parts of the country, there's no threat just

yet of frost pushing us to rush out and strip the garden. But the sudden, heavy rain that broke a dry spell cracked open whole clusters of cherry tomatoes. Right about now, they and their larger neighbors are starting to rot on the vine. When the smell of spoiled tomatoes hits you every time you pass their beds, you know it's time to get a bucket for the rotted ones and a large basket or two for the savers, and settle down to clean up the chaos.

So you do a careful job, and you come in the house carrying baskets and buckets not just of tomatoes, but of peppers and eggplants, and the herbs and greens you picked while you were at it. You want to store some of this for the winter. But where do you start?

Tomato-Glut Sauce

Yields 8 cups.

Here's a delicious recipe from my book, *This Organic Life*. It's a lifesaver when you're drowning in a sea of tomatoes. The ingredients, other than the tomatoes, garlic, and balsamic vinegar, are pretty much up to you, depending on what you have a surplus of. I've put in a lot of cut-up peppers. I've used eggplant and zucchini in place of the carrots. And since I never grow celery, only celery leaf, I put some of that in too. The secret seems to lie in the balsamic vinegar and in the roasting process itself.

6 pounds tomatoes, cored and quartered
(plums are best)
1½ cups coarsely chopped carrots, optional
1½ cups coarsely chopped celery, optional
1½ cups coarsely chopped onion
9 cloves garlic, coarsely chopped
6 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
1 bay leaf
1½ teaspoons chopped fresh thyme
1½ teaspoons chopped fresh oregano
1½ teaspoons chopped fresh basil
1½ teaspoons chopped fresh parsley
1½ teaspoons salt, or to taste
1 tablespoon freshly ground black pepper

- ① Preheat oven to 400 F.
- ② Place all ingredients on a large roasting pan, and roast for 45 minutes, or until vegetables are soft.
- ③ Transfer, in batches, to a food processor, and pulse briefly to blend, leaving the mixture slightly chunky.
- ④ Divide into 2-cup portions, and freeze in freezer-safe bags or containers.

You have to start with the tomatoes, because they're the most fragile. There's time for the other produce later, though it's worth saying here that peppers simply cut into strips, dropped into a bag, and put in the freezer will keep beautifully. Actually, so will tomatoes, if the picking has used up your available time.

Gail Feenstra, of California, simply washes and dries tomatoes, puts them in plastic bags, and freezes them. That's the easiest way to cope with excess. They can be thawed out to make juice or sauce later, when the garden slows down.

Next easiest, and most surprising, is to wash and dry the cherry tomatoes, pack them in 16-ounce jars with basil leaves, a pinch of salt, and 2 tablespoons of vinegar, and then fill the jars with olive oil. Screw on the lids securely, shake to mix, and then simply store them on the shelf until needed. This recipe, along with hundreds of other alternatives to canning and freezing, comes from the farmers of France's *Terre Vivante* in a book titled *Keeping Food Fresh*, edited by Claude Aubert.

Drying tomatoes is something several of us do. In Tucson, Arizona, Barbara Kingsolver dries them on her roof, spreading the tomatoes on oiled screens under cheesecloth tents to deter the birds. Most places are too humid for that, so many of us use food driers. I grow a cherry tomato called 'Principe Borghese,' specifically for its dried sweetness. But my contribution to the easiest solution to tomato glut is the sauce recipe on Page 82.

If you're a canner, make tomato juice, like Mary Anselmino, of Michigan, does. She gets together with friends and makes 40 to 50 quarts of juice by cutting up all the fruit that's neither rotten nor moldy, cooking it down until it's soft, putting it through a food mill, and canning what comes out of the bottom. You also can freeze tomato juice, although 50 quarts would take up a lot of space in the freezer!

Mary's tomato juice party is a reminder that in most times and places, food and community have gone together. Mary also shares a peach gala in August, where she and her neighbors put up 50 to 60 quarts of peaches each.

Gail, who lives in a solar community surrounded by almond trees, speaks fondly of the community almond harvest that marks September. Sheets are laid under the trees, and a mechanical shaker brings down the nuts, which all the neighbors help gather and store.

There's something special about the storing-up process. It makes us feel as if we're going off the food grid, taking care of ourselves year-round. And in a time when the future seems so insecure, there's a warm sense of security in knowing you have food stored away just as autumn begins. 🌿

Preserving Tomatoes

Homegrown tomatoes taste almost as good canned, frozen, or dried, as they do fresh from the garden, and they certainly have far more flavor than the tennis balls supermarkets try to pass off as tomatoes.

If you don't grow enough of your own tomatoes to put away for the winter, you can buy a box or two at a local farmers market. If you shop at the height of the season, you should be able to get a good discount when you buy a larger quantity.

Preservation Methods

The following methods of preserving tomatoes are simple. Try them all.

■ FREEZING

Place whole tomatoes in freezer bags, and freeze. The skins will be easy to remove after thawing, and you can add the tomatoes to soups, or cook them down for sauce or ketchup.

■ DRYING

Start with either cherry or plum tomatoes, which tend to have less juice than slicers. If your area has dry summer weather, cut the tomatoes in half, scoop out some of the seeds and gel, and then lay them on oiled cookie sheets. Cover the cookie sheets with cheesecloth and set in a dry, airy location until the tomatoes are leathery. If your weather is humid, dry your tomatoes in a very low oven, or use an electric food dryer.

■ CANNING

Tomatoes are a great starter food if you're just learning about canning. They're so acidic, they can be canned in a simple water-bath canner.



Joan Gussow is a professor, author, and gardener. She gives thanks to advisers Mary Anselmino, Gail Feenstra, Barbara Kingsolver, Toni Liguori, and Jennifer Wilkins for their input for this article.

Threshing Day

Memories of
the good old steam
engine machines.

By Jim Boan

IT was July 1938. Dad and I hitched Maud and Pearl, our team of matched Belgian mares, to the grain binder, and pulled it out of the storage shed. The humped-back machine needed some repairs. The canvas conveyor belts needed slats riveted, both on the platform where the cut grain would fall and the elevator canvas that carried the cut grain over the hump and dumped it into the bundle-gathering arms where it was collected and tied. The tying mechanism was metal fingers. They tied the bundle knot and cut the twine. This was the only precision unit on the binder, and

the most finicky. We oiled the machine, sharpened the sickle sections, and examined the guards. Then, the team pulled the binder to the wheat field, where we removed the tongue from the end of the binder and positioned it on the side for operation. Finally, we lowered the bull wheel, a large drive wheel that powered the binder.

Dad sat in the operator's seat and drove the team while I shocked the bundles. I'd grab two bundles, and holding the tops together, jam the straw ends into the ground so they'd stand. Then I'd collect a few more bundles to prop up the original two. Taking another bundle, holding the cut ends against my waist, I'd bend the grain heads down. This bundle would be placed on the top to shed rain, if it came.

Day after day, I'd shock wheat until they dotted the field. Later, we'd bring a wagon equipped with a hay frame, and pick up and haul the bundles to the place where the threshing machine was to be located. There,



we made two stacks about 20 feet high, with 8 feet between them. The threshing separator would be pulled into this space.

Some shocks were left in the field. These would be picked up on threshing day by neighbors with their wagons. We announced to our neighbors that the threshing machine would come on a certain day late in July. About half a dozen neighbors showed up with their wagons and families.

The Big Day

I rose early on threshing day, while the dew was still on the grass. Dressed in my homemade denim overalls and shirt, I went outside and sat on a large tree root, wiggling my toes in the dirt, waiting for the shrill whistle of the old steam engine. It was too wide for our country roads, and too high for the tree limbs, so the neighbors had to take down a section of their barbed wire fences in the pasture fields and lay them flat. Only then could the engine and threshing machine move across the valley.

By this time, some neighboring families began to arrive, walking or riding on wagons with hay frames. The men carried pitchforks, and the women hustled baskets of food. We'd have everything from fried chicken, potato salad, deviled eggs, and ham, to fresh garden

radishes, onions, peas, lettuce, and more. There were also desserts of wild blackberry pies, chocolate cakes, and other sweets. Each woman had her mouthwatering specialties, and they expected compliments.

Mother had tables set up under the big elm tree in our yard. We provided a washtub with a 50-pound block of ice, which would melt, yet still keep churned buttermilk and other dairy products fresh, as well as keeping iced tea and several large watermelons cold. I'd walk around those tables, my senses taking in all those scrumptious foods we'd soon be feasting on.

Meanwhile, the steam engine pulled the separator between the two bundle stacks. Chunks of wood were placed on both sides of the separator's steel wheels. The steam engine was positioned for the belt. It was nearly a foot wide and about 30 feet long. The operator put belt dressing on it, so it clung to the pulleys. The belt was stored on top of the separator, and it took two men to handle it.

The engine operator put the machine in gear, and it started with a chug. The separator reminded me of a dog panting, because the whole machine shook, with both sides moving in and out.

Water Boy

The chaff and dust flying from the threshing was too dirty and itchy for the men to remove their shirts. Some tied a large bandanna, soaked in water, around their necks to keep the chaff away from their skin. They sweat profusely in the heat, often soaking their clothes.

Boys my age vied for the job of water boy, in which you got to take water from the spring to the thirsty men. I was competing for the job with visiting boys, but because my dad was doing the hiring, I had an edge. I could make 50 cents! That was a lot of money in those days. Grown men would work all day for a dollar during the Depression.

I grabbed two of the gallon jugs, which were wrapped in burlap, took them to the spring, wet the burlap thoroughly so the water would stay cool, filled the jugs, and then took them back to the threshers. About every hour, I'd take the jugs and go among the workers. As they tilted a jug, the water gurgled and gurgled as they drank. After two or three rounds, I'd have to return to the spring for refills.

The Perkins twins had wanted the job of water boy, and when I got it, they began to pester me. Finally, I told those city boys there were turtles in the spring, and said I'd give them a dime if they'd get rid of them. They disappeared quickly, and the next time I went for water, I found them throwing sticks at the turtles. I then told them that the mossback turtles were actually greenback watermelons, bobbing in the current, and said I'd give them each a nickel if they'd carry the melons to the ice tub by the tables Mom had set up.

A threshing crew takes a break at a farm in Ohio.





A farm family with their Aultman & Taylor steam traction engine.



A threshing crew using a Huber engine.

That's when the whistle blew for dinner. The shrieking whistle hurt my ears, and it also scared Dad's team. The horses began running, and Dad couldn't hold them. He rolled off the wagon. At a forked tree in the corner of the pasture, one horse went on one side and the other on the opposite. The wagon tongue went through the fork of the tree. That stopped the horses. Dad turned the mares loose, and then came to eat.

A Time for Thanks

Dad asked our minister to say the blessing. He agreed, and said, "Lord, thank You for providing this food for the nourishment of our bodies. Thank You for our good neighbors. Thank You for the good women whose hands prepared the food. And protect us from all evil. Amen. Let's eat."

The table was loaded with homegrown Buff Orpington fried chicken, creamy potatoes, baked yams, fresh-from-the-garden green beans, salads, homemade breads, pies, and cakes. There was wild honey, molasses, jams made from peaches and berries, and fresh churned butter.

After dinner, some of the men sprawled out on the grass to rest, while others sat leaning against the trees. A few others, along with the kids, started a watermelon seed-spitting contest.

In a short while, the whistle blew, and the men returned to work. The separator panted, and the wheat came pouring out. Albert Graves was the wheat sacker. He'd fill a sack, take an 8-inch piece of binder twine, gather the top of the sack with one hand and wrap the

twine with the other, leaving his little finger out of the way until the last lap, which went over the finger and under the last wrap of the twine. He never had a sack come open and spill. I admired the way he did it.

Come midafternoon, the whistle blew again, signaling that the threshing was completed. The men mopped their brows, and soon, everyone in the crew was headed for the swimming hole at Big Creek. One young man was very careful to line up flat rocks, so when he left the water, he wouldn't get sand from his feet in his pant legs. He rinsed himself and got out, stepping on the stones he'd arranged. No sand was on his foot as he slipped it into his trouser leg. Soon, however, he was hopping all over the sandy beach with one foot halfway through a trouser leg. Everyone laughed at his predicament. Later, some of the boys admitted to tying a knot in his pant leg.

After the threshing machine left to go to another farm, the fence was restored, and the neighbors were gone, quiet settled over our farmyard. The threshing bee was over until next year.

Well, next year never came. The way of farm life was changing. We sold the Belgian mares and bought a tractor. By the next harvest, we had a combine.

Long gone are the threshing bees. Lordy, how I miss those threshing feasts! 🌾

Jim Boan lives in Bloomfield, Missouri. He enjoys reliving his childhood memories of growing up on a farm, and all the hard work associated with it.

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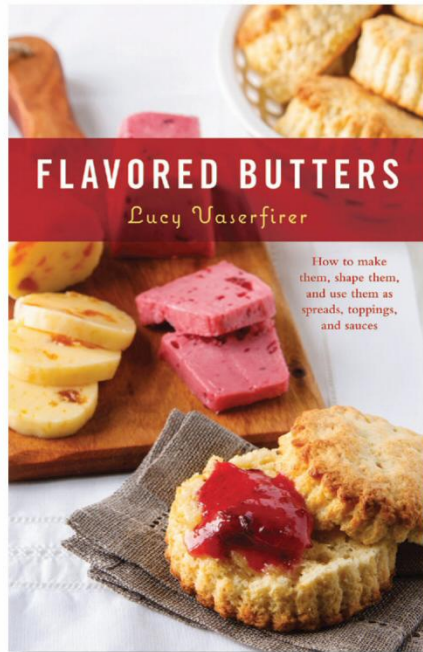
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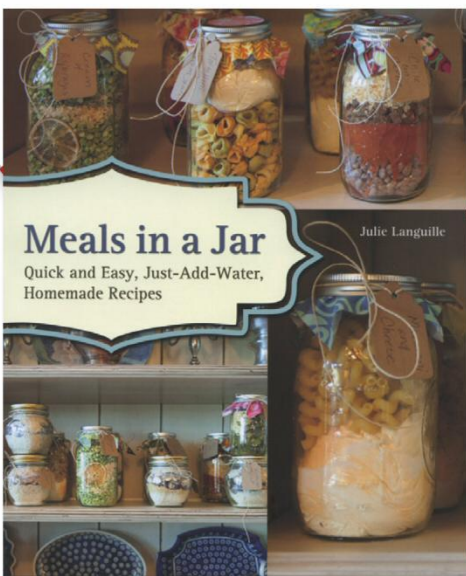
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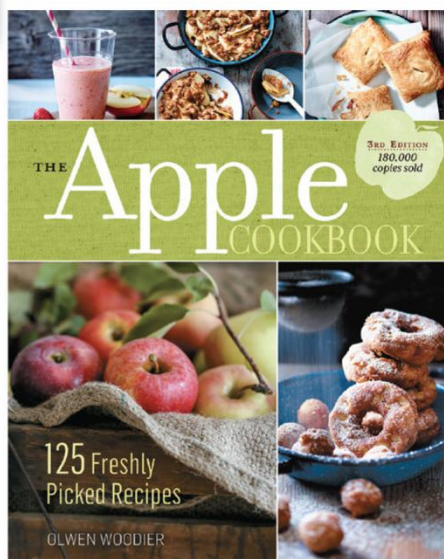
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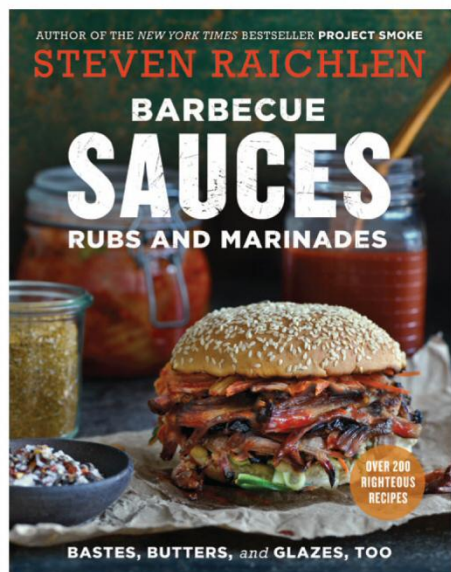
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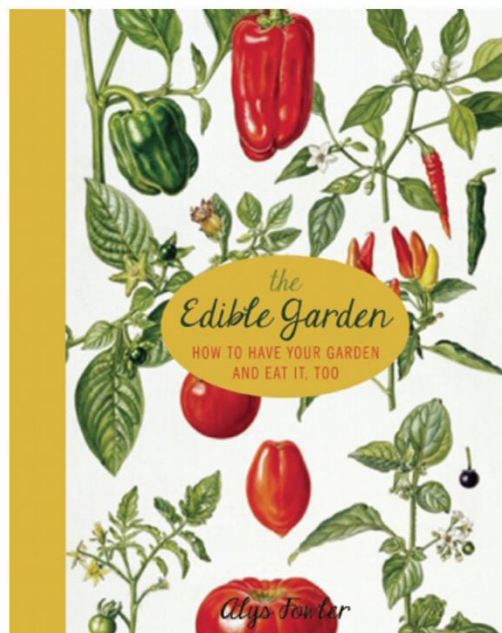
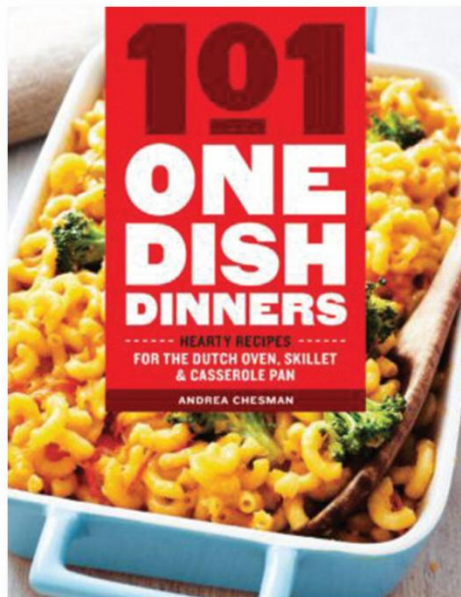


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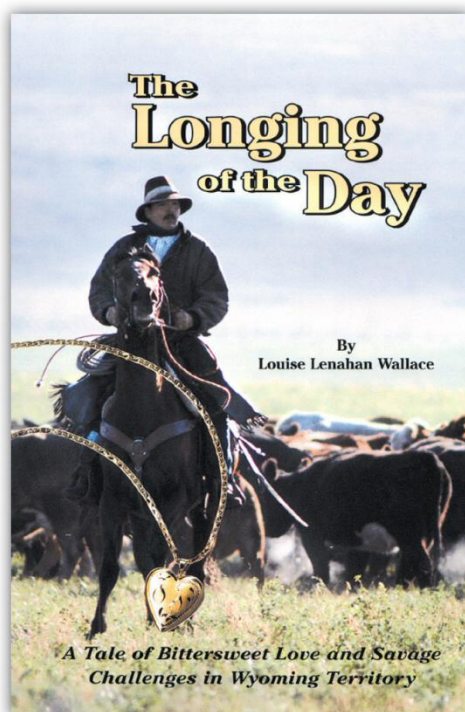
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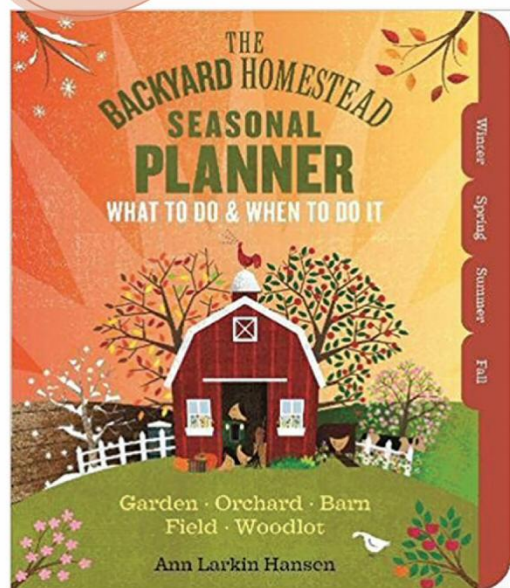
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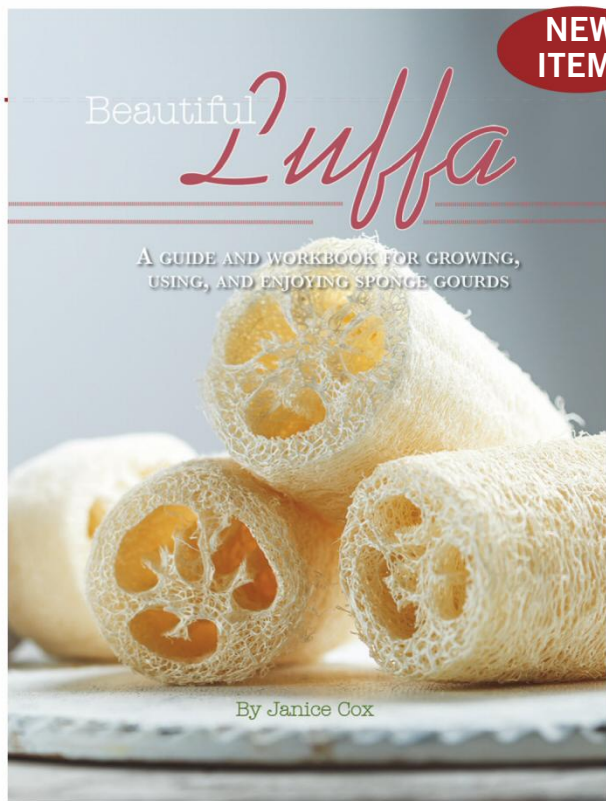
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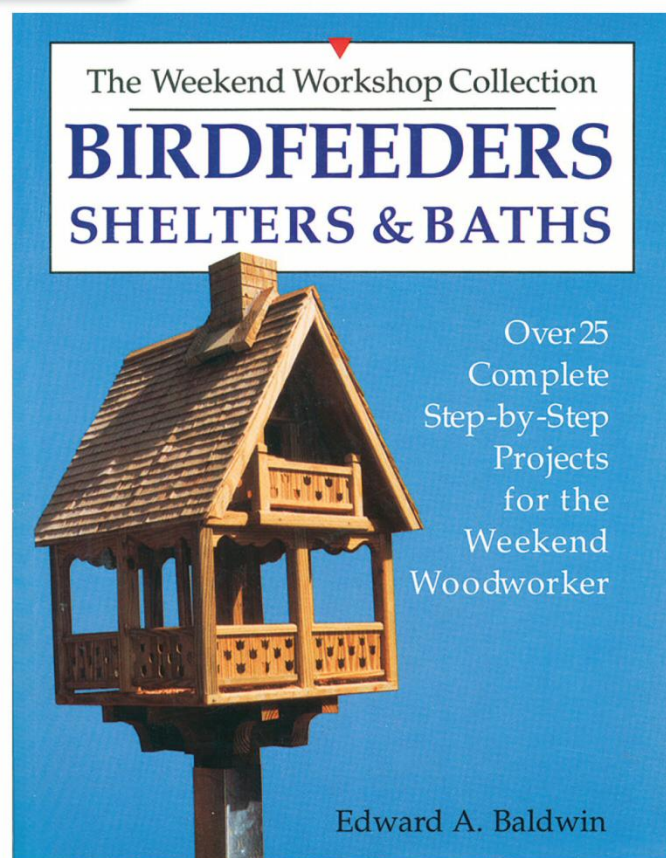
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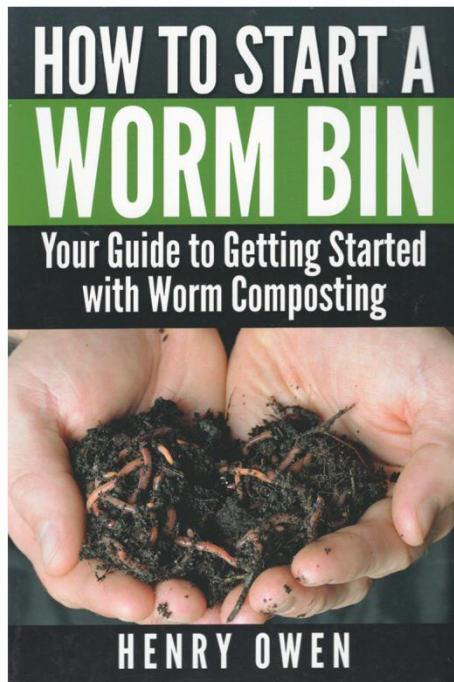
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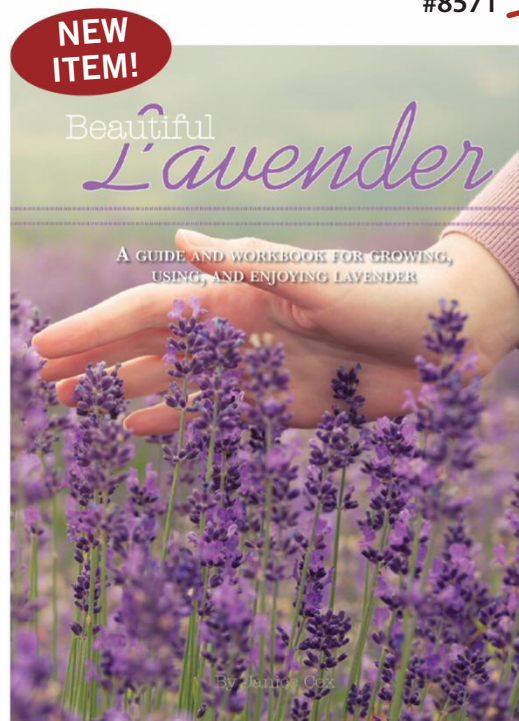


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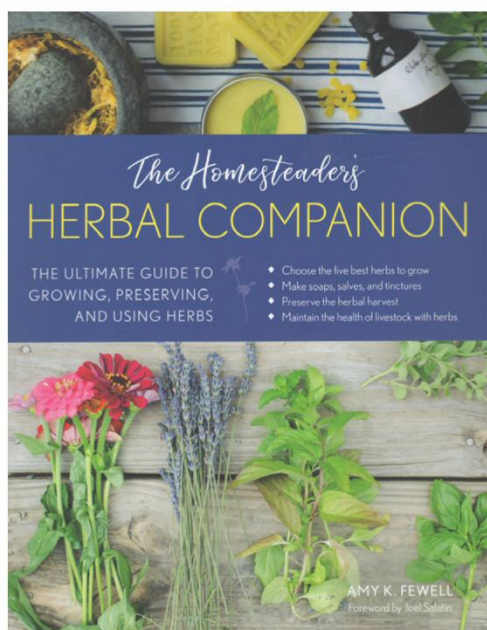
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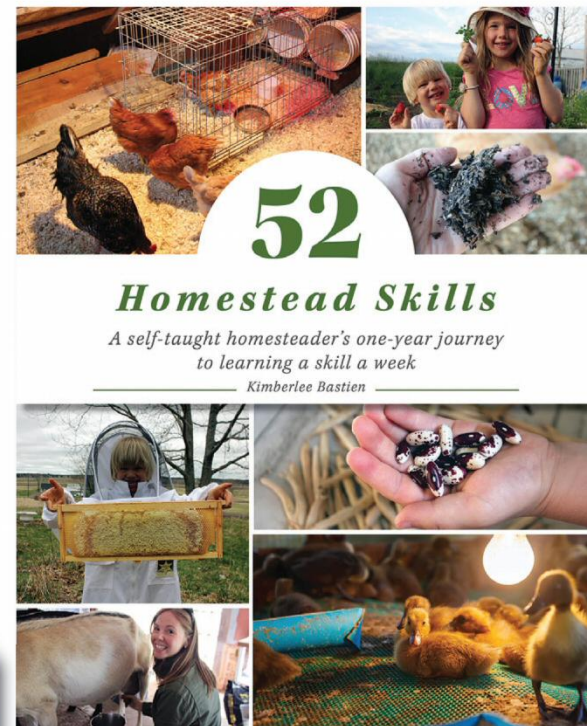
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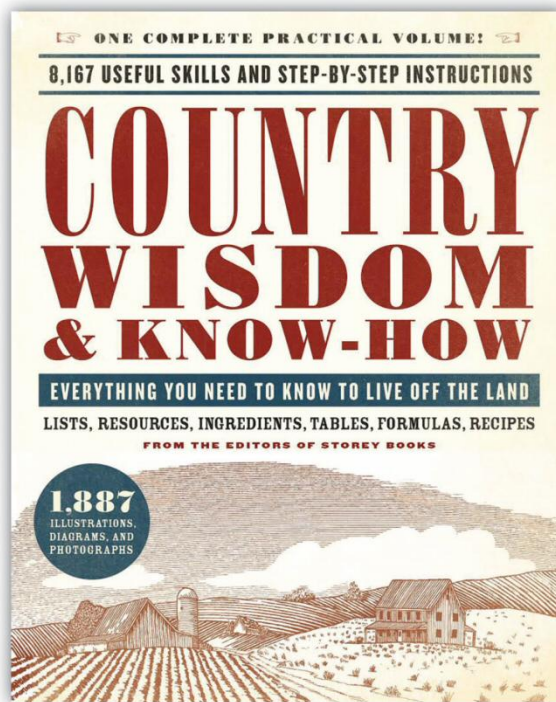
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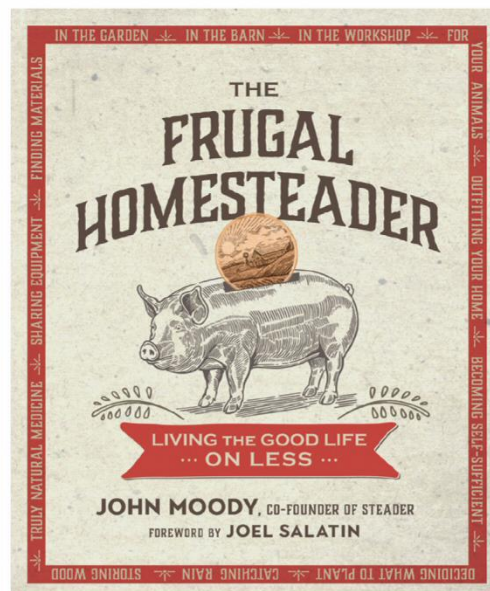
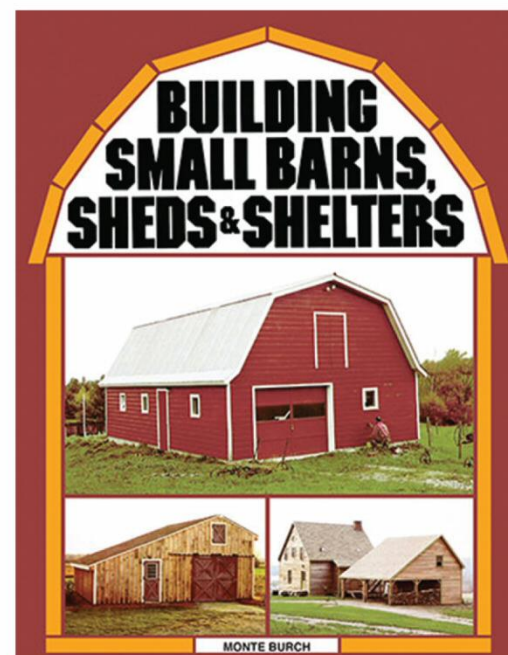
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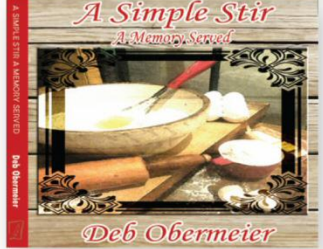
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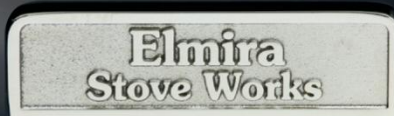
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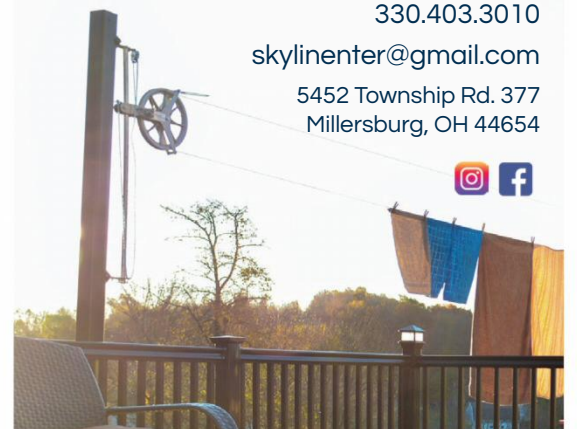
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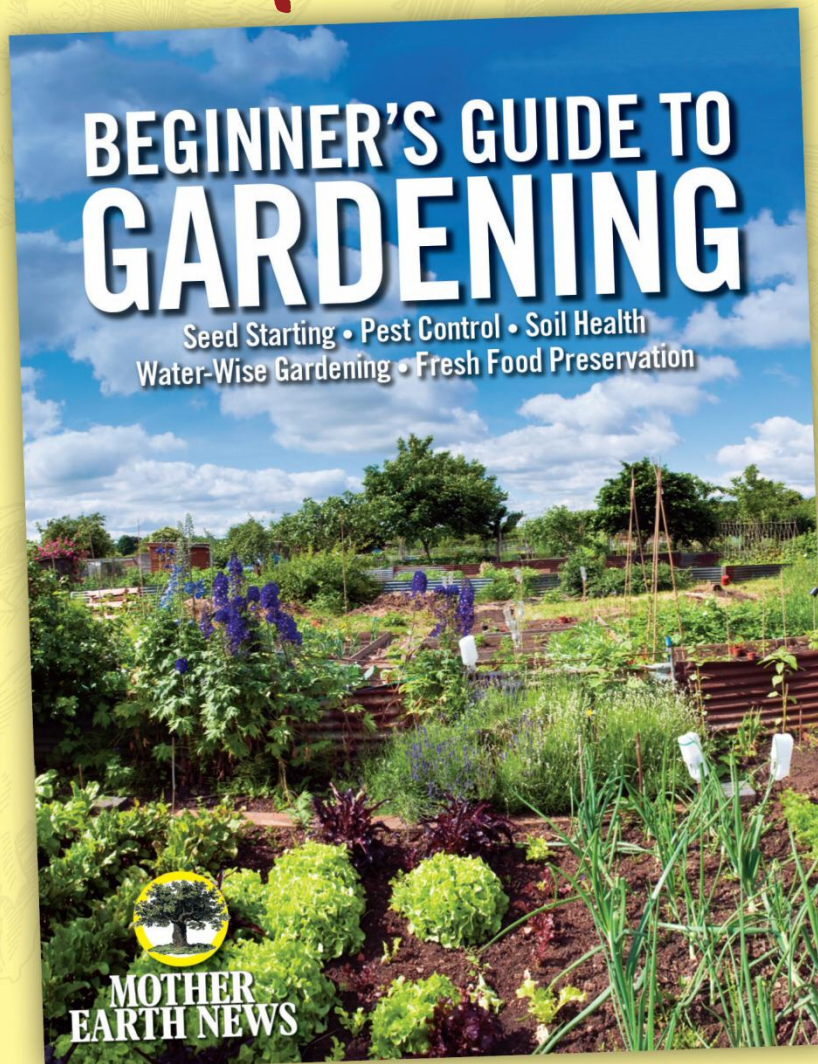


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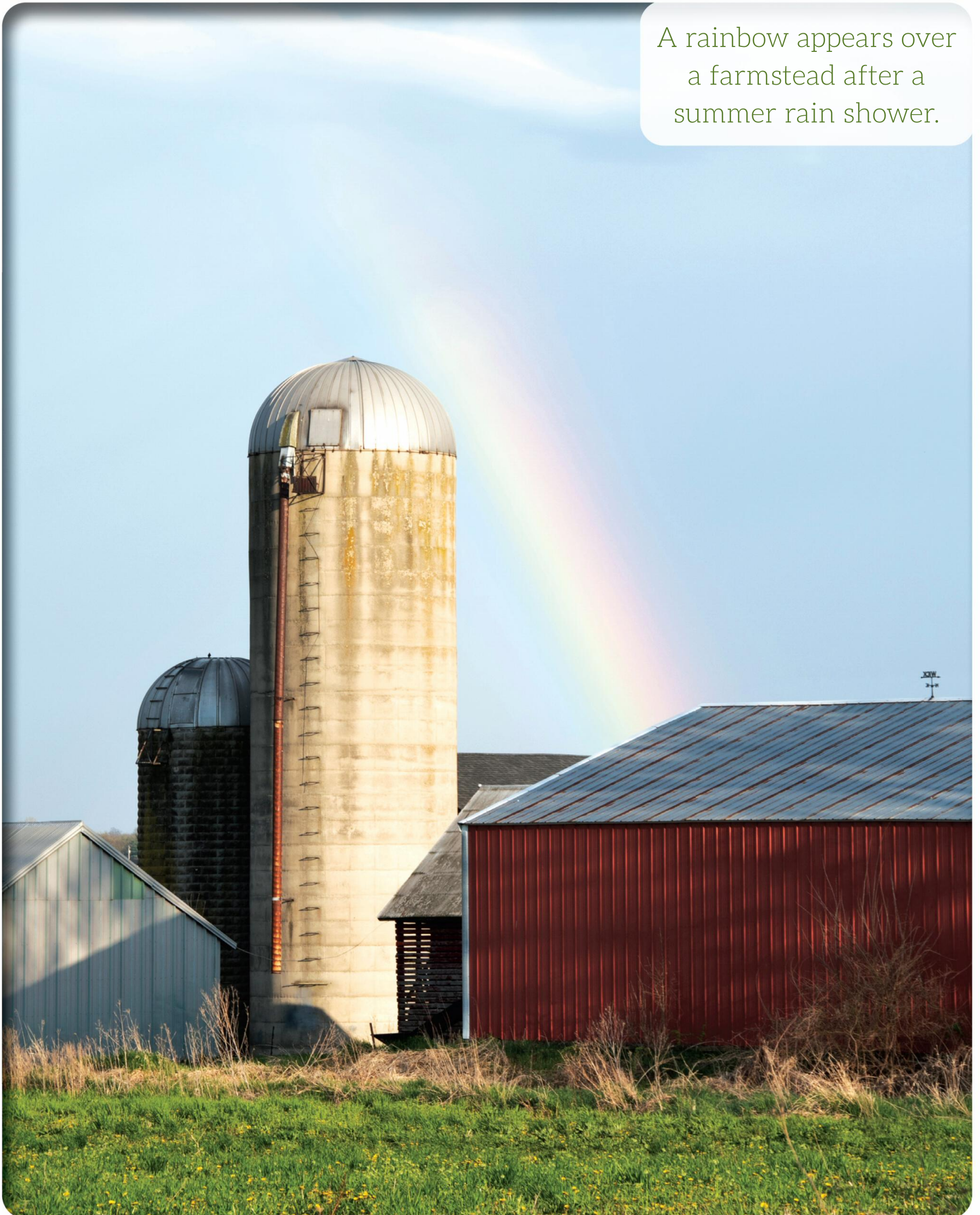


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